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OXFORD LETTER

TO attempt to comment upon all the relevant material that has accumulated since the publication in *Scrutiny* of the last (and I believe first) Oxford Letter would be undesirable, if it were not already impossible ; but even now I do not claim to have made anything more than an arbitrary selection from what has appeared of interest during the past few months. I no less arbitrarily confine myself to the discussion of literature, or what passes for literature ; with philosophy I am concerned in another article ; and perhaps the detailed nature of the latter will compensate for a tendency, not easily avoidable, to generalize in the present.

The New Oxford Outlook, whose rebirth was heralded with such enthusiasm a few years ago, seems to have declined, let us hope only temporarily, from inanition. A university periodical which aims at something more than merely topical interest has difficulties to face of a kind not usually appreciated. There is the necessarily shifting audience, the frequent changes of editorship, and the difficulties of co-operation between junior and senior members. Possibly the only kind of permanence that a critical review such as the *Oxford Outlook* is likely to achieve is that of being periodically revived ; and in this sense it is reverting to tradition, since the habit of publishing magazines at regular intervals, with little or no regard to the quality of the material included, is not of very ancient origin. Nevertheless, when due allowance for difficulties of circumstance has been made, it is still legitimate to enquire whether such a magazine has perished as a result of accident or from natural causes ; and I do not think it will be disputed that the chief natural cause for the death of a magazine is either lack of coherent purpose, or a disparity between what is aimed at and what is achieved.

In the most recent number (November, 1935), we read that the purpose of *The New Oxford Outlook* is ' to express the views of past and present members of the University, and to publish

noteworthy experiments in thought, style and imagination.' There, admittedly, is a high enough aim for you, even if it is couched in somewhat naïve phraseology. But since nothing is more exasperating than to quarrel with statements which, in spite of a certain vagueness, contain no manifest ambiguity, I intend to proceed at once to ask how far this aim has been realized. As to the ' expression of views of present and past members of the university,' I think it is no exaggeration to say that the number of past and present members of the university who have expressed their views has depended to a considerable extent upon the views they had to express. To come straight to the point: all the contributors, with possibly a few minor exceptions (though I do not know of any), have so far been of a distinctly *leftish* persuasion, varying from respectable and moderate socialism to communism. And in saying this I am not suggesting that they were originally *selected* for their radical views, for that is not the kind of argument I am concerned to advance ; what I am rather suggesting is that radicalism in Oxford has become something very like a mark of respectability, so that to be articulate at all is to articulate left-wingèd words. Now radicalism among undergraduates is nothing new and will never be remarkable ; what is both remarkable and new is the tendency to-day for the infection, if that is not too strong a word, to spread to senior members as well.

By radicalism I do not mean exclusively political radicalism, though the tendency is most clearly observed in the political sphere ; nor do I mean radicalism in its true etymological sense, than which nothing is more rare at the present time. I mean rather a general, and on the whole petulant, hostility to traditional values, an uncritical acceptance of what is new because it is new: witness the silly article which appeared some time ago entitled ' Alice in Wonderland Psycho-analysed ' (which would have done very well for *The Isis*), Mr. A. J. Ayer's vindication of Behaviourism, or the monotonous ' cases for socialism ' which seem to turn up regularly in every number.[1] Now all these subjects have their place—I am not

[1]An interesting side-light on this state of affairs is contained in the announcement, in the November 1935 number, of articles to appear in the next issue (due last February but not as yet published). The only reviews specified are ' Recent Poetry,' ' The

suggesting that undergraduates should not talk politics or that dons should not flirt with Behaviourism ; but I do not think this place is a periodical which claims to represent the maturest views (both present and past) of a university whose attitude has always been one of critical detachment—which is never the same as ' indifference '—to current nostrums. The business of a serious, well-presented magazine such as *The New Oxford Outlook* should be to give us not what we are getting in abundance already (in *The Left Review*, for example), but what, for reasons

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Superfluous Novel,' and ' Gollancz Political Series.' I am not sure what is implied by the second category, but the last, in view of the prevailing tone of the magazine, is revealing. It may of course be said that *The New Oxford Outlook* has not yet had time to ' get under way,' and I am aware that this is an important fact to bear in mind. But if a critical review starts, as it inevitably must do, with a statement as to where it is going, we have at least a right to judge the course that it has so far accomplished by its own criterion.

Now that we are on the subject of reviews, I feel bound to mention the notice of *The Rock* which appeared in the last number under the title of ' Mr. Eliot and Orthodoxy.' Leaving aside the fact that the book is described as costing more than double its actual price, this review—surely the work of an undergraduate—would be sufficient to disgrace any magazine, let alone one that can so little afford to be disgraced as *The New Oxford Outlook*. Mr. Eliot is condemned not only because he is ' in a minority,' but also because he conceives of European culture in terms of Aquinas and Andrewes, and not (as apparently a good socialist should do) ' Goethe and Nietzsche.' Finally, after an anti-clerical diatribe at about the level of Mr. Llewelyn Powys, the reviewer observes that ' thousands ' (including himself?) are finding in the Groups, Christian Science and Spiritualism ' a fellowship of a more vital and stimulating nature ' than that to be found in the Church ; and that the erection of libraries and museums (!) for workers has done more for the salvation of souls in South Wales than ever the Church can be expected to do. Whatever may be thought of Mr. Eliot's position, this is surely the most childish attack that has so far been made upon it.

that are well worth investigating, we are not getting at all. Something more is required, in short, than a rather elaborate and expensive bulletin of the Labour Club.

Secondly, as to noteworthy experiments in thought, style and imagination: where are they? Looking through the few back numbers that exist, and employing a by no means illiberal criterion, I can discover no examples of the first category at all. There is a great deal that can be called polemic, witness the long article (November, 1935) entitled ' War and the Psychological Argument ' by A. L. Rowse—an extremely forceful piece of work, containing one or two excellent and excellently made points, but also much that is mere invective ; I think it should now be regarded as bad style, let alone bad manners, to refer continually to your opponents as ' fools ' or ' bourgeois,' and a serious miscalculation to believe that your cause is thereby either advanced or appreciated. And I really do not see that Mr. Ayer's article on Behavourism has a right to be called ' an experiment in thought,' though I could think of an excellent case for calling it an experiment in behaviour.[1]

Secondly, as to ' experiments in style and imagination,' where are they? A few poems by the inevitable trio, Auden, Spender and Day Lewis (' In me two worlds ') ; a Communist ' litany ' by S. V. Benet (' Held down and beaten, the table cutting their loins, Or kicked in the groin and left, with muscles jerking '—Naomi Mitcheson might have written it) ; an ' Extempore Memorial ' by A. L. Rowse beginning ' These anemones, these snowdrops, this frail aconite ' ; and a long outpouring by Paul Engle (some of whose correspondence is given us on another page)—all (I do not wish to exaggerate, but I would refer the reader to the poems themselves) diffuse in expression, imaginatively sterile, and in manner altogether unexperimental. But when we remember Mr. Goronwy Rees ' statement in the November 1933 number about the ' ravishing integrity ' of Mr. Spender's poetry, coupled with his view that *Sweeney Agonistes* ' is so utterly negative that it cannot be poetry,' we ought not to pretend to be surprised. But is this the best that the best in Oxford can do, or does the best in Oxford decline to write in *The New Oxford Outlook*?

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[1]The Behaviourists regard thinking, Mr. Ayer tells us, as a ' laryngeal habit.'

It is difficult to know what we ought to expect from an Anthology, but at least we do not expect masterpieces ; and when the Anthology is based upon bodily rather than spiritual propinquity, we have to make allowances of a more intimate kind. Previous volumes of *Oxford Poetry* are always interesting, if only because they reveal how many undergraduates who have since become eminent statesmen, stockbrokers or city directors, have thought at one time that they would do much better as poets. But even from a purely literary point of view the series is not without importance, for we do occasionally get a volume—take, for example, that edited by Auden and Day Lewis some years ago—which displays some merit *as a whole*, which is a unity and not a mere aggregate. It is therefore with a certain feeling of hopefulness that we read in the introduction to *New Oxford Poetry 1936*, that ' Oxford Poetry is dead. After four barren years this is a resurrection, perhaps even a renascence.' The editor, likewise, gives the impression of aloof, perhaps even somewhat complacent, impartiality, claiming that ' there is enough good stuff included, and there were sufficient " perfumes of yestreen " and " darkling cloisters " in the rejected MSS, to say nothing of " armpit fogs " and " public-lavatory smells " to make one believe it a fairly representative selection.' (Representative of *what*? we may ask. Goodness, or just *difference*?)

All this is very reasonable and moderate and amusing ; but it is quite inappropriate. For the most that can be said of what follows is that it is neither reasonable, nor moderate, nor amusing ; it is just dull. The last thing that I want to do—the last thing that any critic wants to do, except apparently Mr. Charles Madge—is to imitate the methods of Mr. Geoffrey Grigson ; but I think that his remarks upon this volume in *New Verse* were about as little undeserved as anything he has recently written. Either we get the straight-forward ' You came to me ' type of effusion or, more daringly, a bastard Prufrockery (' There will be time to listen and recover One or two themes and a broken sequence '), but the impression is more of an empty tomb than a resurrection, with the tomb invariably rhyming with womb ;[1] a counter-

[1] ' Like an empty tomb
Empty womb . . . ' (p. 22).

reformation rather than a renaissance. Even Messrs. Kenneth Allott and Paul Engle, both of whom have published poems elsewhere, seem to have ' written down ' to the general level rather than done anything to raise it. Finally, what strikes one as surprising, especially at this time of day, is the number of poems written frankly under the influence of Rupert Brooke. But at least that author possessed a certain irony (largely submerged), whereas his disciples, here at any rate, are in dead earnest. The poem on page 48 beginning ' Day, O my Day, How can I let you go ' and ending ' o my day! . . . Go sightless to meet the night,' is almost a transcript of Brooke's early *Day that I have loved.*

I do not propose to end this ' letter ' with a peroration upon the state of mind of Young Oxford. To do this I should have to assemble a great deal more material than I have at my command ; and even then the task would be too great, since the most relevant material for such investigation is nearly always inaccessible. I have preferred to confine my analysis, and as much as possible my generalizations, to matter that is accessible to all. If I am supposed to arrive at any conclusions—and they will no doubt be drawn even if I do not state them—I would point to the fact that *The New Oxford Outlook* is dead, and that *Oxford Poetry* was still-born ; I would also point to the fact, elaborated elsewhere, that Oxford philosophy is in a critical condition. But a university is a junction as well as a terminus ; and it would be folly to assume that those of its members who rush into print are necessarily the best that it can show. What I have criticized here, I have criticized because it claimed to be what it was not ; and if such a task is condemned as being ' negative,' all I can say is that we have seen what ' positivism ' is like.

E. W. F. Tomlin.

THE POETRY OF JULES LAFORGUE

Je songe à une poésie qui serait de la psychologie dans une forme de rêve, avec des fleurs, du vent, des senteurs, d'inextricables symphonies avec une phrase (un sujet) mélodique dont le dessin reparaît de temps en temps.

J.L. in a letter to Charles Henry, December, 1881.

I.

THE influence of Laforgue on modern poetry has been decisive. In the ordinary way it is a mistake to distinguish too sharply between the influence of a writer's outlook and the influence of his style or, as I should prefer to call it, his *method*. In the case of Laforgue, however, some sort of distinction between the two is necessary. I think the point can be illustrated by a comparison between Mr. Pound and Mr. Eliot. It seems to me that Laforgue's influence on Mr. Pound has been almost exclusively of the first, and his most lasting influence on Mr. Eliot of the second kind. It is Mr. Pound's limitation that his best work is sometimes no more than the mature expression of Laforgue's outlook—the mature expression of an outlook that was essentially immature in the sense of *uncompleted*, a term to which I shall try to give precision later. Now one of the most indubitable signs of Mr. Eliot's originality is that his development since *Prufrock* and *Portrait of a Lady* has always been *away* from the outlook of his master. In *The Waste Land* he has clearly learnt all there was to learn technically from the *Derniers vers* and used it to express something infinitely richer and more complex.

For this reason I wish to concentrate in this paper on the method of Laforgue. I may as well begin by recording my own opinion that, from a technical point of view and to a critic writing with Mr. Eliot's work before him, the *Derniers vers* is the most

important single poem published in Europe since the seventeenth century, though its intrinsic merits fall far short of the best work of Baudelaire, Corbière and Rimbaud.[1]

II.

'When we get to Laforgue,' wrote Mr. Eliot in one of his illuminating asides, 'we find a poet who seems to express even more clearly even than Baudelaire the difficulties of his own age: he speaks to us, or spoke to my generation, more intimately than Baudelaire. Only later we conclude that Laforgue's "present" is a narrower "present" than Baudelaire's, and that Baudelaire's present extends to more of the past and more of the future.'[2]

The 'intimacy' with which Laforgue speaks to us and the 'narrowness' of his outlook are factors of the first importance and need to be carefully investigated—investigated, as Mr. Eliot points out, in relation to Baudelaire. For Baudelaire dominates his age to such a degree that his contemporaries and successors can only be placed in relation to him. There are lines in the *Sanglot de la terre*, Laforgue's earliest collection of verse, which an intelligent candidate in a practical criticism paper at Cambridge might pardonably attribute to the author of the *Fleurs du mal*. For instance:

> O convoi solennel des soleils magnifiques,
> Nouez et dénouez vos vastes masses d'or,
> Doucement, tristement, sur de graves musiques,
> Menez le deuil très lent de votre soeur qui dort.

But though the mistake might be made with a short extract, it would scarcely happen with a whole poem.

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[1]Though Mr. Eliot's description of Laforgue as 'a minor successor' of Baudelaire is totally inadequate. This remark, which was made in 1930, illustrates a marked tendency in Mr. Eliot's later criticism to do less than justice to his former masters. Compare his essay in *A Garland for John Donne* with the essays on 'The Metaphysical Poets' and 'Andrew Marvell.'

[2]In a review of *Baudelaire and the Symbolists* in the *Criterion*, December, 1929, pp. 358-9.

Le blanc soleil de juin amollit les trottoirs.
Sur mon lit, seul, prostré comme en ma sépulture
(Close de rideaux blancs, œuvre d'une main pure),
Je râle doucement aux extases des soirs.

Un relent énervant expire d'un mouchoir
Et promène sur mes lèvres sa chevelure
Et, comme un piano voisin rêve en mesure,
Je tournoie au concert rythmé des encensoirs.

Tout est un songe. Oh! viens, corps soyeux que j'adore,
Fondons-nous, et sans but, plus oublieux encore ;
Et tiédis longuement ainsi mes yeux fermés.

Depuis l'éternité, croyez-le bien, Madame,
L'Archet qui sur nos nerfs pince ces tristes gammes
Appelait pour ce jour nos atomes charmés.

There is a good deal of Baudelaire here. The rhythm of some of the lines is his. *Amollit* is one of the soft, voluptuous words that he loved ; and the *sépulture*, the *extases des soirs* and the *encensoirs* are all part of the furniture of the *Fleurs du mal*. But often when Laforgue is being most imitative, he will suddenly become most himself. The prostrate young man is a glimpse of the peculiar spiritual defeatism which contributes so largely to the sense of ' intimacy ' we get from his work. We shall meet the curtained windows and the pianos again and again—they are an important part of Laforgue's symbolism. We shall also meet the adolescent hunger not simply for love, but for chaste love which is so different both from the weary satiety of Baudelaire and the healthy animality of Corbière. The *main pure* looks forward to the

Jeunes Filles inviolables et frêles

of the *Derniers vers*. It is significant that Laforgue's ' chastity ' is essentially negative. Indeed, his half-heartedness about sexual love and his recoil from the physical contribute more than anything to the impression of immaturity that his verse creates. The last three lines of the poem are the most characteristic of all. They point to the *Complaintes* and indicate the direction his development was to take.

Although the fact that Laforgue's development after the *Sanglot de la terre* was always *away* from Baudelaire is one of the clearest signs of his originality, it is also one of the clearest signs of his limitation—not merely a personal limitation, but a limitation inherent in the age. In placing Laforgue we have to remember that his 'intimacy' and his 'narrowness' are inseparable. In other words, his limitations are peculiarly a function of his genius. With this reservation, it can be said that his practice is a radical and thorough-going criticism of the work of Baudelaire. It can be seen in his language and imagery, in his versification, and in his wit. I propose to consider them in that order.

Laforgue tried, as Corbière before him had tried, to get rid of the old worn out 'poetic' words; but both his aim and his procedure were different from Corbière's and far more like Donne's. Corbière's work represents the restoration of an old language rather than the invention of a new one. He tried to purge words of their romantic associations and restore their natural properties in order to express an elemental, and in a sense a primitive experience. Thus where Corbière's language is simple Laforgue's is extremely sophisticated, but it marks a definite extension of the field of poetry. He had to forge a language which would express the new feelings that were emerging with the progress of urban civilization and which would also express his peculiar and, it seems to me, very limited disillusion. His third group of poems, *L'Imitation de Notre-Dame de la lune*, is the product of a period of the wildest experiments with language; and the results of these experiments can be seen all through his work. It is completely successful in

> La rouille ronge en leurs *spleens kilométriques*
> Les fils télégraphiques des grandes routes où nul ne passe

which admirably express his own particular *ennui*, but is unsuccessful and forced in

> *Armorial d'anémie!*
> Psautiers d'automne!

As with his imagery, so with his language. He did not merely use words which had been considered unpoetic, he invented new ones. The sort of words he invented and the way he invented

are curiously reminiscent of Donne when faced with a similar situation. He has, for instance, *ennuiversel, éternullité, sexiproque, enflaquer, féminiculture, kilométrique, lunalogue, ritourneller, spleenuosite.*[1]

Contemporary critics have stressed the ' counter-romantic ' tendency of Baudelaire's poetry, but it is generally recognized that it retained certain romantic traits. Superficially Laforgue's experiments with language seem to complete Baudelaire's work by making a clean sweep of those romantic elements from which he had failed to free himself. This view strikes me as frankly mistaken. There were certainly romantic elements in Baudelaire, but they were accidentals and not essentials. They were his macabre sensationalism and a love of the theatrical and not, as is commonly supposed, his use of the grand style or of words (apparently) borrowed from the vocabulary of the Romantics like *beauté, tristesse, solitaire, splendeur*—the words which, in Laforgue's admirable phrase, *enchasublent* the subject. His use of them has little in common with that of the Romantics—a point of capital importance in discussing his relations with Laforgue.

What makes Baudelaire a very great figure indeed is that he explored the potentialities of human experience far more thoroughly than any of his contemporaries, and was capable of regarding the human situation from a greater number of different angles than they. The deepest thing in his poetry is his awareness of the contrast between the potential splendour of human life and its actual squalor. This perpetual contrast could not have been adequately expressed in the style and language of Laforgue,

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[1]A poet's vocabulary is one of the most reliable indications of his outlook. For the sake of completeness it is worth pointing out a further difference between Corbière and Laforgue. Corbière's preference was for the firm, virile words like *faraud, farouche, contumace, brute*: Laforgue's for words suggesting impotence and disease like *phtisie pulmonaire, anémie, langueurs, débilité, palpitations*. A study of their work suggests that Corbière was concerned to defend certain primary human experiences which were in danger of being destroyed by the development of civilization, while Laforgue was content to register their destruction with a melancholy resignation.

which have a sort of thinness—excellent no doubt for Laforgue's purpose, but useless for Baudelaire's. What Baudelaire had to say could only have been said in the ample measure of the alexandrine and in a language that described the present and at the same time suggested what had been lost.

The difference between the two poets can be seen most clearly in their presentation of Paris. The Paris of Baudelaire has the universality and the impersonality of great poetry which we do not find in Laforgue's. There is nothing absurd in the parallels that French critics are fond of drawing between Baudelaire's Paris and the *Inferno*, but no one could possibly make the same claim for Laforgue. In comparison his Paris is local and personal. But if Laforgue seems narrow and pedestrian in comparison with Baudelaire, if he can only offer one point of view, it is not altogether his fault. With Baudelaire something went out of French poetry and, except for a fugitive reappearance in Rimbaud, went out for good.

III.

The origins of free verse have been the source of a good deal of speculation in France, mostly of a somewhat fruitless nature. Gourmont's chapter in the *Esthétique de la langue française* contains one or two suggestive remarks, but on the whole it is disappointing, and in one particular thoroughly misleading. Gourmont was too good a critic not to realize that the free verse of a writer like Laforgue was something completely new ; but when he goes on to trace parallels between nineteenth-century free verse and free verse in Latin compositions of the eighth century—he had a maddening strain of pedantry which comes out to the full in this book—he is simply confusing the issues. He is not the only person who has done it. ' The *vers libre* of Jules Laforgue . . . ' wrote Mr. Eliot, ' is free verse in much the same way that the later verse of Shakespeare, Webster, Tourneur, is free verse: that is to say, it stretches, contracts, and distorts the traditional French measure as later Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry stretches, contracts and distorts the blank verse measure.'[1]

[1]Introduction to *Selected Poems of Ezra Pound*, p. viii.

It is interesting to learn, as we do from Mr. Eliot's Introduction, that his own versification was based on a study of Laforgue and the later Elizabethans ; but the connection is a personal one and the suggestion that there is some objective relation between the two strikes me as hopelessly misleading. And to speak of Laforgue as one who ' stretches, contracts and distorts ' the alexandrine is to minimize his technical brilliance unnecessarily.

Mr. Edouard Dujardin, Laforgue's editor and the reputed inventor of the ' silent monologue,' is a more satisfactory guide. In an article published in the *Mercure de France*[1] he argues that free verse was not the invention of a single poet, but the spontaneous result of a collective movement. That is the main point. A vital art-form must be the spontaneous outcome of the conditions in which the artist is living. Free verse appeared when it did because it was the only medium capable of expressing the modern poet's experience. It is essentially a nineteenth-century phenomenon. It has nothing to do with the versification of any other period. Its real affinities are with similar movements in the other arts—with impressionism in painting, the silent monologue in the novel and—most striking of all—with the cinema.

This is not the place to discuss the relations between the different arts in detail, but it is only when we see modern poetry in relation to painting, the novel and the cinema that we are in a position to appreciate the importance of free verse and ' place ' the poets of the movement. The simultaneous appearance of free verse and impressionism was due to changes that had been going on in the European sensibility. They were the outcome of the same impulse and as literary critics it is our business to isolate that impulse.

Free verse and impressionism were both movements of liberation, simultaneous reactions against romanticism and a decadent classicism. It was Laforgue's achievement to have realized that the grand style was all over and done with and that the poet's experience could no longer be forced into the *cadre* of the alexandrine. He saw that traditional verse-forms were incapable of expressing the subtleties of the modern sensibility and in particular

[1]March 15th, 1921.

the *movement* of the contemporary mind. And the impressionist realized that the classical painter's angle of vision had become stereotyped and distorted the artist's experience. Thus there appears to me to be a connection between the disuse of the alexandrine and the disuse of the classical line of David and Ingres. Baudelaire, as usual, puts his finger on the point when he says *La phrase poétique peut imiter la ligne horizontale, la ligne droite ascendante, la ligne droite descendante.*[1] What is striking about poetry is the disappearance of line, of the sculptural element that we find in Vigny, Leconte de Lisle and in Baudelaire's own *La Beauté*. As a final comment there is Baudelaire's criticism of Ingres. *Le grand défaut de M. Ingres*, he wrote, *est de vouloir imposer à chaque type qui pose sous son oeil un perfectionnement plus ou moins despotique emprunté au répertoire des idées classiques.*[2]

It is necessary to carry the analysis a stage further, to go behind art to changes that were taking place in the mind of Europe. Classical theories of art are based ultimately on classical metaphysics, on the assumption that reality is independent of the perceiving mind and that the function of the artist is to represent it. The origins of modern art go back to the period when the classical metaphysic was challenged by the rise of the idealist philosophies. It is a change, in other words, from a philosophy of *being* to a philosophy of *knowing*. It no longer matters what a thing *is*—what matters is my experience of it. Thus the idealist's assertion that the real was not independent of mind, but a synthesis of the perceiving subject and the thing perceived, meant that the artist was no longer occupied with things but with his reactions to them. It means that instead of the mind conforming to the real, the real is made to conform to the mind which imposes its own pattern on everything.

The implications of these theories are patent. Classical meta-

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[1]*Fleurs du mal*, Projets de Préface. *Oeuvres Complètes* (Ed. J. Crépet) T.I, p. 376.

[2]*Art romantique, Oeuvres Complètes* T.III, p. 68. See also Laforgue's valuable paper on impressionism in *Mélanges posthumes*. This volume is well worth attention. In addition to the paper on impressionism, it includes *Pierrot fumiste* and some penetrating notes on Baudelaire and Corbière.

physics, by insisting that the real was the same for all and that everyone had a similar experience of it, guaranteed the social basis of art. The art produced under its influence tended to express what was common to all—to be the consummate expression of a social experience. In departing from this assumption the artist rejects the social basis of art, but he reveals human nature to itself in a way that would otherwise have been unthinkable.

Le vrai vers libre, wrote Gourmont,[1] *est conçu comme tel, c'est-à-dire comme fragment dessiné sur le modèle de son idée émotive, et non plus déterminé par la loi fixe du nombre.*

In short, anything that was likely to fetter the artist's experience, to interfere with the *idée émotive,* was removed. Laforgue gave to poetry an instrument that was capable of reflecting the rapidly shifting vision of our time. The *Derniers vers* is a poem of 816 lines which registers the constant shift and change of feeling, the play of feeling within a prevailing mood, that a sensitive person experiences in modern urban conditions. Its great virtues are the fidelity and insight with which the changes are recorded, its great fault the absence of any unity but the poet's personality. It contains astonishing passages, but is not completely successful as a criticism of the human situation. It does not possess the same finality in this respect as *The Waste Land* because of the absence of any intellectual structure. But this in no way alters its technical importance. Take the beginning of the fourth section:

> C'est l'automne, l'automne, l'automne,
> Le grand vent et toute sa séquelle
> De représailles! et de musiques! . . .
> Rideaux tirés, clôture annuelle,
> Chute des feuilles, des Antigones, des Philomèles:
> Mon fossoyeur, *Alas poor Yorick*!
> Les remue à la pelle! . . .

'Autumn'—symbol of a definite emotional state in this poem—restates the principal theme of the poem, the dominant mood. The repetition shows the poet's growing despair. The next two lines refer back to the storm in the previous section. The wind that roars and thunders all through the *Derniers vers* is no

[1] *Esthétique de la langue française,* Paris, 1894, p. 229.

romantic accompaniment, but a symbol of the tumult going on in the poet's mind. The drawn curtains, tattered notices on the hoardings and falling leaves are familiar symbols of *ennui* and despair. The precise images and exact noting of the names on the play bills fix the particular scene in the mind. I take Antigone and Philomel to stand for certain human values which are in the process of disappearing.[1] They may also be symbols of the departed glamour of ' the Season ' and suggest the poet's sense of exile from the gay and prosperous world. The mingling of the falling leaves and the fragments of the play bills is deliberate: the general mood is related to the loss of particular values (spiritual and material). The reference to *Hamlet—Hamlet* played a role of capital importance in Laforgue's development—is the focal point of the passage. It deftly continues the literary allusion and at the same time provides an ironical comment on the whole situation—on the futility of certain virtues in a civilization like our own. The image of the comic grave-digger disrespectfully turning up the bones of the dead suggests the crossing-sweeper whisking away the relics of past splendour. The suddenness of the gesture is an admirable instance of Laforgue's technical dexterity. The whole passage is a good illustration of the way in which the pliancy of Laforgue's medium and his method of allusion enable him to evoke the mood of the entire poem whenever he likes and to bring it into relation with a particular situation. This alone is a technical innovation of the first importance.

' Words, images and entire friezes of imagery recur, not once or twice but constantly,' wrote Mr. Quennell of Laforgue.[2] The implication that Laforgue's range of feeling is limited is true, but this does not mean that his use of stock-imagery is a shortcoming. Indeed, part of his achievement was to have worked out an elaborate system of reference and association, a sort of poetic short-hand. The recurring image, which has been brilliantly developed in *The Waste Land*, is an important part of the system.

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[1]There may be an implied contrast between the stability of Greek and the instability of modern civilization. Compare *The Waste Land* ll. 97-103 and see Edmund Wilson's commentary on them in *Axels Castle*, pp. 108-9.

[2]*Baudelaire and the Symbolists*, p. 132.

One of the results of the change of sensibility already discussed was that the emotional life of Europe was suddenly divided, forming new combinations of feeling. A verse-form was needed which would not only express the rapid change from one feeling to its opposite, but would also show the mind simultaneously possessed by diverse and even conflicting feelings. Thus instead of describing emotion, Laforgue translates it into precise, visual images which recur again and again. They are symbols in the strict sense, or as he himself described them, *phrases mélodiques*. In his latest work they are used with kaleidoscopic effect and constantly shifted so as to form new patterns of feeling. The ' meaning ' of his poetry, indeed, often consists in the relations between the symbols, in the sudden transitions from one emotion to its opposite. The most important symbols are the processions of school girls going two by two to Mass which stand for innocence and faith in contrast to the poet's sophistication and unbelief ; Paris streets on Sunday afternoons and the mingling of the out-of-tune piano with the vespers bell suggesting the receding tide of faith ; the curtained windows suggesting boredom and bourgeois degradation of life ; and the storm discussed above.

The symbol of autumn, which plays the same part in the *Derniers vers* as spring in *The Waste Land*, is so important that it needs some elucidation. The poem begins:

> Blocus sentimental! Messageries du Levant! . . .
> Oh, tombée de la pluie! Oh! tombée de la nuit,
> Oh! le vent! . . .
> La Toussaint, la Noël et la Nouvelle Année,
> Oh, dans les bruines, toutes mes cheminées! . . .
> D'usines . . .

Laforgue seldom used the device of omitting his main verbs more skilfully than he does in this remarkable passage. It suggests a state of complete instability—an instability that could only be represented by the poet's powerlessness to make any *statement* about his feelings at all. The halting rhythms and broken lines give the impression of some one floundering helplessly in the dark, struggling pathetically against the storm without making any headway ; and, by implication, of the poet's powerlessness to dominate his own emotions.

The sudden impact of *Blocus sentimental* on the reader is tremendous. It gives a physical sense of emotional inhibition which is heightened by the succession of short, abrupt phrases that seem to beat down on one like the rain and the gusts of wind. *Messageries du Levant* means a biting east wind—the sort of wind that numbs. In this way *emotional numbness* and *physical numbness* become associated. The description of the rain and the dark emphasizes the feeling of helplessness. The names of the principal winter feasts suggest a long, dreary expanse of time. *Bruines* refers back to the second line: the image is the obliteration of the landscape by the rain and the dark, and is clearly intended to express the poet's sense of personal obliteration. *Toutes mes cheminées* suggests a total loss of direction. The fading of the factories in the mist may refer to the world of practical activity from which the poet is cut off. The sudden break at *usines* gives the sensation of collapse which is emphasized a few lines later by

> Il bruine ;
> Dans la forêt mouillée, les toiles d'araignées
> Ploient sous les gouttes d'eau, et c'est leur ruine.

The bending of the spiders' webs reinforces the image of the man bending under the storm. This is clinched by *ruine* which is the theme of the *Derniers vers* as death is the theme of *The Waste Land*.

The expression of the mood of the poem is so complete in these lines that the merest reference—as, for instance, in the passage from the fourth section analysed above—is sufficient to evoke the whole.

The opening of the third section is one of the finest passages in the *Derniers vers*:

> Ainsi donc, pauvre, pâle et piètre individu
> Qui ne croit à son Moi qu'à ses moments perdus,
> Je vis s'effacer ma fiancée
> Emportée par le cours des choses,
> Telle l'épine voit s'effeuiller,
> Sous prétexte de soir sa meilleure rose.
> Or, cette nuit anniversaire, toutes les Walkyries du vent
> Sont revenues beugler par les fentes de ma porte:

Vae soli!
Mais, ah! qu'importe?
Il fallait m'en étourdir avant!
Trop tard! ma petite folie est morte!
Qu'importe *Vae soli*!
Je ne trouverai plus ma petite folie.

Le grand vent bâillonné,
S'endimanche enfin le ciel du matin.
Et alors, eh! allez donc, carillonnez,
Toutes cloches des bons dimanches!
Et passez layettes et collerettes et robes blanches
Dans un frou-frou de lavandes et de thym
Vers l'encens et les brioches!
Tout pour la famille, quoi! *Vae soli*! C'est certain.

These lines are a perfect example of Laforgue's peculiarly delicate sensibility. They are also an admirable example of his transition from one set of feelings to another.

The *pauvre, pâle et piètre individu* re-emphasizes the poet's devastating sense of his own helplessness which is characteristic of all Laforgue's work. The *Moi* contrasts the poet's real helplessness with his assumed bravado and attempts to pass it off as a joke. *S'effacer* re-introduces the obliteration motif. The woman is snatched away and becomes part of the world from which the poet is cut off. *Emportée* . . . suggests movement, suggests someone irresistibly carried away and lost, which is one of the themes of the poem. *L'épine*—the desolate, despoiled thorn goes back to *pauvre, pâle et piètre*. The short, broken lines which follow suggest the short, violent gusts of the storm and, at the same time, the feverish workings of the mind.

The change from the short line to the long and gradually lengthening line in the second part indicates the calm which follows the storm. The transition is superbly managed. The calm of nature reflects the calm of the poet, though we must not overlook the implication that it is a calm born of exhaustion. *Bâillonné*, 'gagged,' is another instance of the word that pulls us up short. *S'endimanche* is the pivotal word of the passage and links two sets of images—the calm of nature and spiritual calm. This is reinforced by the troop of girls going to Mass. The sound of the

storm merges into the carolling of church bells. The whistling of the wind (blowing away the rose leaves) is replaced by the delicate *frou-frou* of the dresses ; the smell of the rose, with its romantic associations, by the scent of lavender suggesting domestic peace, clean clothes and neat drawers. The reference to *brioches* (bread that is blessed and given to the faithful to take home) is apparently used to contrast the families united in the Faith with the outcast poet. (Hence the repeated *Vae soli*!)

There is a passage in the seventh section which calls for comment:

> Où est-elle à cette heure?
> Peut-être qu'elle pleure . . .
> Où est-elle à cette heure?
> Oh! du moins, soigne-toi, je t'en conjure!
>
> O fraîcheur des bois le long de la route,
> O châle de mélancolie, toute âme est un peu aux écoutes,
> Que ma vie
> Fait envie!
> Cette impériale de diligence tient de la magie.

I have chosen this as an example of cinema technique. It is a common cinematic device—very much used by Pudovkin—to show a perfectly calm landscape after a scene of great emotional intensity. In this passage feeling is worked up to its maximum by the use of short, abrupt lines (paralleled by the short staccato Russian cutting), the agonized self-questioning and the hysterical *Soigne-toi*, then there is a sudden change to landscape. The word *fraîcheur* comes with a shock of inexpressible relief. (It should be noted that Mr. Eliot has made use of this device—the opening of *The Waste Land* is a good instance—by his references to flowers and the sea which provide the same form of release as this passage).

The importance of Laforgue's work should now be apparent. The result of his experiments was that the contemporary poet found an instrument at hand which was capable of expressing the full complexity of his outlook. This is a different thing from saying that Laforgue's own poetry is complex or mature. In spite of the fact that his feelings are often complicated, his outlook is neither

complex nor mature. His poetry is a little deceptive. When one first comes to it, it appears far more complex than it really is. It is only later that one sees that it has a surface-complexity which is sometimes little more than a peculiar kind of verbiage. His symbolism depends for its success on a close correspondence between the symbol and the emotion symbolized ; but Laforgue was sometimes inclined to throw unusual words and images together in the hope that something astonishing would come of it. It is a fault that we find repeatedly in the *Imitation de Notre-Dame de la lune* (*e.g.* the piece called *La lune est stérile*), but there are also instances in the *Derniers vers*. I wish to examine in detail a passage from the tenth section.

> O géraniums diaphanes, guerroyeurs sortilèges,
> Sacrilèges monomanes!
> Emballages, dévergondages, douches! O pressoirs
> Des vendanges des grands soirs!
> Layettes aux abois,
> Thyrses au fond des bois!
> Transfusions, représailles,
> Relevailles, compresses et l'éternelle potion,
> *Angelus !* n'en pouvoir plus
> De débâcles nuptiales! de débâcles nuptiales! . . .

This passage has been singled out by Mr. Eliot as an example of ' something which looks very like the [metaphysical] conceit ' in French poetry.[1] I cannot help feeling that there is a strange confusion here. It is an example of Laforgue's impressionist psychological notation, and though it certainly has the surface-complexity noted above, it has nothing of the genuine complexity of the metaphysical conceit. There are words suggesting violent attacks and counter-attacks like *guerroyeurs, sortilèges, représailles*. There is another group suggesting compression—*emballages, pressoirs, compresses*—which is set off against words suggesting outburst or overflow—*dévergondages, douches, transfusions*. A further group is less obscure—words like *layettes, relevailles, Angelus*, meaning baby-clothing, churchings, religion, apparently signify happy married life as opposed to the *débâcles nuptiales*.

[1] *Selected Essays*, p. 275.

They may also be contrasted with the violence and confusion suggested by the first two lines.

The feelings are certainly ' tangled,' but I find nothing that can be called ' a whole of tangled feelings '—though clearly there ought to be. If the poet's aim was to suggest mental conflict, a tug of war between opposing feelings, what he tried to do is very imperfectly realized. What I wish to contrast is the internal disconnection of the passage with the internal coherence of Donne's conceits. There seems to me to be one essential difference between the metaphysical conceit and Laforgue's method of psychological association. A conceit like ' On a round ball ' or the compasses is a unity in which the parts are rigorously subordinated to a central purpose. It is an *intellectual* process, and it is the intellectual element that distinguishes it from the apparent conceits in Laforgue's poetry. The metaphysical conceit is used to relate a particular experience—one might almost call it a thought-experience —to a general *body of principles* and not, as with Laforgue, simply to relate a particular feeling to a general *body of feelings*. Thus the structure of Donne's work is intellectual in a way that Laforgue's is not. It is also apparent from the internal disconnection of this passage that Laforgue's attitude was necessarily fragmentary and disconnected too.

This difference between Laforgue and the Metaphysical Poets is so vital that I must be forgiven for underlining it. ' Donne, Corbière, Laforgue,' wrote Mr. Eliot in another place,[1] ' begin with their own feelings, and their limitation is that they do not always get much outside or beyond ; Shakespeare, one feels, arrives at an objective world by a process from himself, whoever he was, as the centre and starting point . . . With the Donne and the French poets the pattern is given by what goes on in the mind, rather than by the exterior events which provoke the mental activity and play of thought and feeling.'

This is an acute criticism of Laforgue ; but it is only partly true of Corbière[2] and scarcely true at all of Donne. It is not true

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[1] *A Garland for John Donne*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1931, pp. 15-6.

[2] I have discussed this aspect of Corbière's poetry in an article in *The Criterion* for April, 1936.

of Donne because Donne was after all a Christian ; and however personal his religion may have been, it did provide a point of reference *outside* his immediate feelings. His mind and outlook show the impress of a training in scholastic philosophy, and the *tension* we find in his work comes precisely from the endeavour to integrate new experiences into a system of traditional philosophy. The weakness of Laforgue's poetry, as we have it, is largely due to the fact that he had no system—his preoccupation with German philosophy is decisive on this point—and that his only point of reference was his own *personality*. Thus one feels obliged to dissent when Mr. Eliot remarks that ' A poet like Donne, or like Baudelaire or Laforgue, may almost be considered the inventor of an attitude, a system of feeling or of morals.'[1] This confuses the issues by attributing to Laforgue precisely that quality which Donne and Baudelaire possessed and which he was without. What makes Donne and Baudelaire ' bigger ' men than their contemporaries is the fact that in their work the mood of the moment—the personal mood—is subordinated to something lasting and impersonal which can be described as an ' outlook ' in the fullest sense of the term. For Donne and for Baudelaire the problem was never merely a personal one: there was a complete correspondence between the personal problem and the problem of the age.[2] With Laforgue, one feels, the problem was largely a personal one, far more personal than critics have realized.

IV.

Laforgue's wit has had a considerable influence on later poets and has also attracted a great deal of attention from critics. It must be confessed, however, that the influence has not been wholly

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[1] *Selected Essays*, p. 278.

[2] With both Donne and Baudelaire the problem seems to be primarily a religious one. It is clear from Baudelaire's prose works—the criticism as well as the diaries—that he had a thorough grasp of Catholic theology. The particular significance of his work, as of Donne's, seems to me to lie in the feeling that he was (perhaps unwillingly) part of a general movement *away* from traditional principles.

for the good and that the critical attention has not always been of the right kind. The criticism has been on the whole too indulgent, and it has not discriminated sufficiently between the use to which his wit ought to have been put and the uses to which it was put. It has never been pointed out that it sometimes degenerates into a trick or that it is far too limited an instrument to serve as the basis of an outlook. There is an immense difference in this respect between the wit of Corbière and the wit of Laforgue. Corbière's wit is essentially positive and is used in the service of an aggressive attitude, while Laforgue's is negative and is often used not to affirm a position, but to avoid taking up a position at all.

The proper use of Laforgue's wit is as an ironic commentary on experience—a use which is well illustrated by the opening of the fifth section of the *Derniers vers*:

> Amour absolu, carrefour sans fontaine ;
> Mais, à tous les bouts, d'étourdissantes fêtes foraines.
>
> Jamais franches,
> Ou le poing sur la hanche :
> Avec toutes, l'amour s'échange
> Simple et sans foi comme un bonjour.

There is a deliberate contrast between the solemn opening in the romantic style and the brisk movement of the next four lines, suggesting the bustle and the crude tunes of the fair. *Le poing sur la hanche* probably refers to the gesture of the hard-boiled prostitute and provides further comment of the opening line. *Simple et sans foi comme un bonjour* is a cynical and startling final comment which is entirely successful.

There is a better known, but less successful example in the tenth section:

> J'aurai passé ma vie le long des quais
> A faillir m'embarquer
> Dans de bien funestes histoires,
> Tout cela pour l'amour
> De mon coeur fou de la gloire d'amour.
>
> Oh, qu'ils sont pittoresques les trains manqués! . . .

The procedure is the same as in the last passage. The wit consists largely in the tone, in the ' levity ' of the treatment. The suspended image at the close performs the same function as before—the sudden concentration of the whole feeling of the passage into a single image raises it to a fresh level of intensity and seriousness. The passage as a whole, however, is unconvincing. It leaves us with the same feeling of uneasiness that we get from the *Autre complainte de Lord Pierrot*, in spite of the undeniable brilliance of that poem, and from a good deal that Laforgue wrote besides. For the poet is not as detached or as single-minded as he tries to appear. There is something specious about the jaunty, man-of-the-world attitude which is used to conceal the underlying sentimentality. A comparison between these lines and Corbière's *Poète contumace*, where the same method is used to express a genuinely mature attitude, should be decisive.

The truth is that Laforgue's wit is often an attempt to solve his own emotional problems. Thus in the *Autre complainte de Lord Pierrot* his criticism of romantic love in ineffectual *as criticism* because it is perfectly clear that he is ridiculing an attitude from which he is trying to free himself, but has not yet managed to do so. The fact that he uses irony as a means to something else makes disasters inevitable. One nearly always has the feeling that his wit may collapse at any moment into sentimentality, and this sometimes happens even in the *Derniers vers*:

> Bref, j'allais me donner d'un ' Je vous aime '
> Quand je m'avisai non sans peine
> Que d'abord je ne me possédais pas bien moi-même.

This is a palpable attempt to pass off one's confusion as a joke.

I can make my point best in considering an important but neglected side of Laforgue's poetry—his religious symbolism. We might begin by comparing some lines from Baudelaire's *Franciscae meae laudes* with a passage from a poem in the *Fleurs de bonne volonté*:

> Esto sertis implicata
> O femina delicata,
> Per quam solvuntur peccata
> . . . . . .

Quum vitiorum tempestas
Turbabat omnes semitas
Apparuisti, Deitas,
Velut stella salutaris
In naufragiis amaris . . .

Laforgue has:

J'aime, j'aime de tout mon siècle! cette hostie
Féminine en si vierge et destructible chair
Qu'on voit, au point du jour, altièrement sertie
Dans de cendreuses toilettes déjà d'hiver,
Se fuir le long des cris surhumains de la mer!

Superficially the procedure is the same—an ironic contrast between the sacredness of the subject and the levity of the poet's tone—but the result is entirely different. Baudelaire combines two opposing feelings in order to form a new and perverse one. By an ingenious twist *solvuntur peccata* is made to suggest liberation from sin by salvation and liberation from desire through satisfaction, and this is emphasized by the play on *salutaris*. Laforgue compares a successful seduction with the reception of the Sacrament. The woman is described as *cette hostie féminine* and *hostie* is given its double sense of Sacrament and Victim.

The difference between the two passages is primarily a difference of tone. It is clear that for Baudelaire the religious emotion was at least as real as the sexual, and his words could be accurately described as blasphemous. The allusions in Laforgue, on the other hand, are those of a man who has consciously and deliberately detached himself from the Faith. The words have lost something of their former meaning and become convenient counters, and there is an instinctive lack of reverence which prevents them from being blasphemous in the way in which Baudelaire's undoubtedly are. What is strikingly new is the note of spiritual apathy. It is very marked in the little known *Petite prière sans prétentions*:

Et laissez-nous en paix, morts aux mondes meilleurs,
Paître, dans notre coin, et forniquer, et rire! . . .

Paître, dans notre coin, et forniquer et rire! . . .

where the last line appears to be a mocking imitation of an invisible congregation repeating the prayer after the priest.

Laforgue's peculiar state of mind is revealed most strikingly, however, in a passage from the *Derniers vers*:

> Ah! moi, je demeure l'Ours Blanc!
> Je suis venu par ces banquises
> Plus pures que les communiantes en blanc . . .
> Moi, je ne vais pas à l'église,
> Moi, je suis le Grand Chancelier de l'Analyse,
> Qu'on se le dise.

This passage is clearly intended as a contrast between the poet's sophistication and unbelief and the innocence and faith of the children going to Mass. The important point is the use of capitals for *Ours Blanc* and *Grand Chancelier de l'Analyse*. The bear represents the outcast poet, but is deliberately turned into a comic bear. It is the trick—familiar in the later work of Mr. Aldous Huxley—of a writer who wishes to express a point of view without committing himself definitely to any one position, and takes refuge in caricature. The poet chooses to present himself as the nineteenth-century sceptic, but is careful not to identify himself too closely with the tradition of Renan and Taine. The passage is not altogether successful—it is obviously the voice of the romantic young man and not that of the convinced sceptic—but it illustrates the way in which Laforgue was using poetry in an attempt to solve his personal problems.

The passage is important for another reason. It shows that in spite of his curious intellectual timidity, Laforgue did recognize the necessity of taking up a definite position and that at bottom he was not content with the evasion he practised. There seems to me to be a marked tendency in his later work to free himself from all accepted attitudes—from traditional religion and traditional (romantic) love—as he had freed himself from traditional verse-forms. At the time of his death the process was incomplete and it is impossible to say how much further it would have gone. He seemed to be moving towards a position of spiritual neutrality and was very far from formulating anything resembling a positive outlook at all. His detachment was still incomplete, and his interest in German philosophy shows that he felt the need of a substitute for the thing he had abandoned. All this makes him a bad master as far as the content of his work is concerned and explains why

the influence of his very seductive spiritual defeatism on later poets has been unfortunate. It is possible that he might have become ' the inventor of an attitude,' but we cannot be certain. The disparity between his technical maturity and his emotional immaturity tells heavily against him ; and his extreme spiritual defeatism makes one wonder whether he had it in him to develop a positive attitude towards anything.

What would have happened can only be a matter of conjecture. It is important to stress the fact that Laforgue was trying to work out a position. He therefore belongs to Baudelaire and his school and not to Mallarmé and his descendants. The significance of Mallarmé and Valéry is that they make a definite attempt to dispense with a positive outlook of any sort. This explains the negative element, the constant preoccupation with sterility, that we find in Mallarmé. And I cannot help feeling that ' pure poetry,' for which he was ultimately responsible, is a subtle form of escapism. It is an attempt to make the worship of form a substitute for an outlook, and it therefore becomes a means of avoiding the necessity of committing oneself to a position at all.

G. M. Turnell.

TIGHT-ROPES TO PARNASSUS

A NOTE ON CONTEMPORARY MUSIC[1]

MR. Cecil Gray is one of those self-consciously tough persons who are standing no sentimental nonsense about ' the contemporary situation.' He devotes considerable pains and much erudition to proving to his own satisfaction that the uncertainty and perplexity which assails the modern artist is, and always has been, a universal thing ; that the unrest which, say, Donne felt is essentially the same as that experienced by Stravinsky. If the artist to-day blames his age for the ' difficulties ' he hasn't strength enough to overcome, then he is a sentimentalist and a weakling. This train of thought leads Mr. Gray, in accordance with a woolly and pretentious theory of the cynical behaviour of the arts, to the singular conclusion that conditions in England are at present peculiarly favourable for a musical renaissance ; ' all that remains to be done is to secure the birth of a few great men.' We can only reply that an age which, while being in any serious sense socially and economically conducive to art, doesn't produce great artists seems to us an anachronism. And if, to this quotation, we add

> ' The present age is tired of individualism and freedom of expression and yearns for law, order and tradition . . . The music of to-morrow will be distinguished for its orthodoxy, impersonality, and solidarity.'

and

> ' . . . nothing would be better for the arts to-day than a rigorous course of classicism,'

we see how tentatively Mr. Gray fumbles after, and how completely he misses, the point. He would furnish us with tradition, classicism and orthodoxy *ad hoc*—as he might capriciously decide

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[1] *Predicaments, or Music and the Future*, by Cecil Gray (Oxford, 7/6).
Chronicle of my Life, by Igor Stravinsky (Gollancz, 8/6).

on a little ' classical ' decoration in the bathroom. His prolonged jeering at Vaughan William's remarks about nationalism, even though one admits the futility and sentimentality, at this date, of the folky composer, makes it obvious that he doesn't realize why the Elizabethan age (for instance), although admittedly an ' age of transition,' managed to produce much great music while this present age of transition so conspicuously hasn't ; that he doesn't realize that it is only through being ' national ' (though in a much more profound sense than, say, Grieg and early Bartok are national) that a composer will succeed in being—to use a word favoured by Mr. Gray—'universal,' will make his art an expression not only of his individual response to experience but of a whole code of thinking and feeling beyond, and consistent with, itself—of a ' way of life.' Bruce Pattison has discussed the question in its sociological aspects in earlier numbers of *Scrutiny*. In this note I want to approach the subject rather from the artist's standpoint, to offer a few pointers to the nature of the sensibility of the modern artist, and the kind of subterfuge resorted to by him in his efforts to gloss over the difficulties inherent in his environment. The publication of a book purporting to deal with the future of music, and of the autobiography of the composer who, of all modern artists, is perhaps most typical of his age, seems to provide adequate opportunity.

Isolation is the most obvious characteristic of the modern sensibility. In the great creative ages of the past the artist has always been helped by the society and the conventions among which he lived ; to-day, vital conventions are non-existent and ' society,' become mechanized and cosmopolitan, is a hindrance to the artist rather than a help. (Elgar was probably the last *great* composer to be to any degree endorsed by a society). Thus the contemporary artist is not only isolated from, but hostile to, his environment. Even Debussy and Delius were so far oppressed by a feeling of isolation as to apotheosize individual sensation ; with no solidarity they were forced to go on imitating themselves until their work became at times only a sort of spurious tickling of the emotional palate, their insistence on harmony at the expense of melody being perhaps indicative of a deficiency in creative vitality. Early in the century it became apparent that nothing more could be done along these lines. But there was no tradition to turn to, no principle

but that of reaction—reaction from the cult of sensation for its own sake to its opposite ; to ' abstraction,' Technique with a capital T, the utter rejection of feeling ; or to the cult of frivolity, the deliberate refusal to take such emotions as one may have, seriously.

Stravinsky is peculiarly significant as a figure-head in that he combines in his development (if it may be so called) all the representative trends of contemporary musical thought. In the early ballets he is a vivid impressionist exploiting his ' national ' ancestry through rhythm and orchestral colour rather than, like Debussy, through harmony. The exploitation of rhythm then becomes merged into his hostility towards his environment and he produces those two masterpieces of the cult of primitivism—the *Sacre* and *Les Noces*, works in which he is revealed as a genuine, vital, but minor and escapist talent. In the autobiography, Stravinsky writes:

> ' People are apparently fully aware of the sort of monster to which the world is about to give birth, and perceive with annoyance that man cannot live without some kind of cult. An effort is therefore made to refurbish old cults . . . '

not realizing how neatly his words apply to himself. During the war-years came the first of the notorious series of ' reactions.' After the barbaric, we have the cynical-intellectual, exploitation of rhythm. This reaches culmination in *L'Histoire du Soldat* which consists entirely of a sort of intellectual jiggery-pokery with metre, but lacks, for all its ingenuity, any sort of rhythmic subtlety since rhythm can only become subtle if it has ' meaning ' and imaginative integrity, and here it is purely mechanical. With the series of facetious exercises for unusual combinations Stravinsky's vitality seems completely to have atrophied. His work henceforth is mental and imaginative automatism ; and the age of pastiche is inaugurated. Now the cry is ' back to Bach,' now to Haydn, now to Gounod, now to Tchaikovsky. Without the creative imagination to make a tune himself, Stravinsky ' applies ' the melodies of the composer he happens to be running at the moment, to his characteristic rhythmic jig-saw puzzles, galvanizing them into a desperate affectation of life. Stravinsky talks a great deal about the ' classicality ' of art and his love of the Apollonian principle. The whole of his career in which, with no tradition to

guide him, he has turned, when deprived of one conviction, with studied irresponsibility to another, has hardly sufficed to prove to him that it's no use seeking the Apollonian unless you are first firmly rooted in the Dionysiac ; that true classicism is something other, something more difficult than, a matter of technique.

The logical culmination of the confusion between impersonality and abstraction is, of course, the bread-and-butter music of Hindemith, of which it need only be said that it has, ultimately, no more a utilitarian than an æsthetic reason for existing. (Constant Lambert very properly describes Craft for Craft's Sake as Oscar Wilde masquerading in proletarian overalls). Mr. Gray's account of the other main group of experimental composers, the atonalists, is easily the most satisfactory part of his book, and he shows convincingly how so complete a break with tradition is a limitation rather than an expansion of means. Atonalism would seem to be an adequate medium for the expression of certain precious, morbid, esoteric sensibilities such as are manifested in Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (where the obsession with technique in the narrow sense is extrinsic) and in Berg's *Wozzeck*. The fact that the works of the most relentless of the atonalists, Webern, rarely last more than a minute or so, and seldom employ dynamic indication greater than pianissimo is surely significant. Webern's music is genuine, with an exquisite and subtle beauty, but not even the boldest of his admirers could claim that it contains within it the germ of the music of the future.

Side by side with the cult of technique goes the cult of Frivolity. The return of composers like Sauguet to the vulgarity of the music-hall is patently an inversion of the sentimentality of Stravinsky's complete anti-emotionalism. Sauguet describes himself as being ' dans le vrai tradition de Gounod ' and, however insignificant æsthetically, he has at least the merit of being, at his best, witty rather than dull. Equally representative are composers like Poulenc, Auric, and, with reservations, Milhaud, who, pretending to be in the line of Chabrier, combine, something in the manner of the Sitwells, the gaiety and sentimentality of the nineties with briskly irreverent modernisms and the more palpably ' amusing ' conventionalities of the eighteenth century. (All conventions are ' amusing,' of course, cut off from the life that gives them meaning). What these composers don't realize is that

Chabrier, that delightful and still under-estimated artist, was endorsed by a Parisian society which is now almost extinct, so that at the same time as he ' places ' his ' vulgarity ' and military-band exoticisms he responds to them gleefully and sympathetically whereas the pasticheurs have nothing to offer but the glib irreverence consequent upon the loss of any sort of centrality. This sophisticated gingering-up of the commonplace is not in itself gay ; to use Mr. Lambert's phrase, it recalls the type of music played in places popularly supposed to be gay. Jean Wiéner seems to me the only legitimate successor to Chabrier and he has done for the blues, foxtrots and ballads of to-day something of what Chabrier did for the musical comedy themes of the nineties. But his re-creation of popular music is still Parisian rather than cosmopolitan ; he is the last of the Chabrier ethos, not really a contemporary composer at all.

The cult of frivolity in music seems to me one of the most conspicuous and depressing examples of what Mr. L. H. Myers has called ' the deep-seated spiritual vulgarity of our age.' But I do not want to suggest that it is impossible for the composer to create major works to-day, only that they will necessarily be few and isolated. There is—we aren't allowed to forget it—still Sibelius, and the music of Van Dieren (though I am not able personally to feel very enthusiastic) and of Bartok before he got stuck in the bog of sadistic obsession with discord, may exert, in a minor way, a stimulating influence. And there is, of course, the English school. Vaughan Williams, after a somewhat regressive start in the folk idiom, has established himself unquestionably as a major composer with *Job*, *Flos Campi*, the *Mass*, the *F minor Symphony* and the *Piano Concerto*—magnificent music combining the waning native tradition with an austere contemporaneity. There is no living composer who speaks a language more profoundly immediate and personal or who has a more potent sense of the ' past as present,' while the fact that he could create such delightful and genuine ' light ' music as *The Poisoned Kiss* without the help of any convention is itself proof of an acute and remarkable intelligence and talent. Constant Lambert and William Walton, almost if not quite as emphatically endowed with genius, have made an admirable attempt to reconcile the English traditional line of Purcell and Boyce with the jazz

distortions and and agitations of the contemporary scene ; but even so it is difficult fully to share Mr. Gray's optimism, for it is questionable how long these men can go on producing fine music without an audience. In saying this I am not forgetful of the enthusiastic reception accorded (thanks to the B.B.C.) to Walton's Symphony, for such an audience is obviously very different from the participating communal audience of the Elizabethans ; nor do the consequences of the ' popular ' acceptance of, say, Mr. Auden afford much ground for encouragement.

It is because this lack of solidarity still remains the central problem for the composer to-day, that Erik Satie seems to occupy so unique a position. Mr. Gray's one sneering reference to Satie—a comparison of his ' pseudo-classicism ' with that of Eliot which makes it only too clear that Mr. Gray is no better qualified to listen to Satie's music than to read poetry—is typical of the long-established habit of treating Satie as a rather tasteless joke. Yet no composer took himself more seriously, nor realized his position more acutely. ' Je suis venu au monde très jeune dans un temps très vieux,' he wrote, and his music records a persistent (and successful) attempt to maintain the purity, logicality and integrity of his response in an age in which the temptations to emotional insincerity are perhaps greater than ever before. I think Mr. Constant Lambert, in the only intelligent account I have come across,[1] overstresses the ' abstraction ' of Satie's art, or at least his choice of word is unfortunate in that it might suggest some kinship with the later Stravinsky. Satie's abstraction is rather an exquisite integrity of feeling, a poise and detachment in which is implicit a mature irony. The only difference between the early *Gymnopodies*, *Gnossienes* and *Sarabandes*—which in their very calm, lucid gravity are immediately and intensely poignant—and the so-called ' quaint ' and ' sardonic ' pieces is that the ' detachment ' has sharpened explicitly into irony ; one has only to forget the textual commentary and to *listen to* the music to see that these pieces are essentially serious, certainly not ' comic ' in any pejorative sense. Within his narrow limits Satie has the ' terrifying honesty ' of the great artist ; he consistently refuses to stimulate his responses artificially, and if he is ' child-like ' it is because he

[1] *Music Ho*, p. 123 *et seq.*

has the sort of innocence which matters for the artist, not because he is infantile. The basis of Satie's music is, of course, intensely personal, intensely French ; but his scrupulous honesty makes imperative that continual critical-ironic quality, that concern for detachment, objectivity, the veracity and simplicity of means, which reaches, in *Socrate*, something very like freezing point. The fact that *Socrate* approaches freezing point, the fact indeed, that Satie is only a minor composer, is an intrinsic part of his significance. *Socrate* is the logical culmination of Satie's refusal to play his emotions false, or to take the easiest way ; it is a triumph of emotional integrity, and hence, of course, of technique.[1] The integrity of *Socrate* made it inevitably extremely limited in scope ; but it made it too, in the words of Henri Sauguet, ' émouvante jusqu'aux larmes.' It is surely revealing that almost all contemporary composers and artists of any consequence have looked upon Satie's music as one of the most significant manifestations of the age, and have see in *Socrate* ' une beauté probe et honnête,' a quality of solitariness which is peculiarly terrifying and which they could not afford to ignore. If critics have found this music ' funny '—and I am not disclaiming the ' genial ' French quality which played so important a part in the *formation* of Satie's sensibility—then it is because, in Stravinsky's words, ' ears corrupted by emotional and sentimental verbiage and inoculated with academic doctrine . . . cannot but remain deaf to work which has against it the misfortune of being purely music '—pure music, that is, because its inspiration is utterly pure and integral.

The composer, Georges Auric, wrote:

> ' A tight-rope walker and a dancer are the two creatures combined in any artist who moves me. Every new work is a tight-rope stretched above an everlasting track. To-day, you can realize how very cautiously artists like Stravinsky and Satie have to cross the wire which is to be their only way.'

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[1]The assertion of some critics that Satie was an incompetent amateur is so ludicrous that it can be attributable only to the grossest ignorance of his work. Mr. Lambert has pointed out how the composer Roussel, who gave Satie some lessons, said, ' Il n'avait rien à apprendre . . . il était prodigieusement musicien.'

I have tried to suggest how Stravinsky and his kind have cheated, have floated over the rope with the help of artificial wings. It is Satie's peculiar significance that he kept to the wire without stumbling. He himself said, ' L'artiste n'a pas le droit de disposer inutilement du temps de son auditeur,' and the whole of his artistic career suffices to prove that this remark was very much more than a genial pleasantry. There is room for an intelligent study of Satie's work—particularly with regard to its limitations—for such a study would do much to illuminate the problems facing the artist to-day and to dissipate the haze created by incompetent dilettantes like Mr. Gray. In particular, chapters on those delightful and intrinsically important works *Parade* and *Relâche* would throw light on the ascendancy, in the present century, of the art of ballet, while the discussion of works like the *Musique d'ameublement*, the *Cinq Grimaces*, the cinema-music and the valses chantés would illustrate Satie's remarkably acute, intelligent and consistent attitude to occasional, incidental, and ' light ' music—a discussion, moreover, which would be peculiarly valuable in these days of the wholesale exploitation of music for commercial reasons.[1] As a whole, finally, the book might do something to clarify Mr. Gray's on the whole just contention that Berlioz, probably the greatest master of pure music since Beethoven; is likely, more than any single living composer, to influence the music of the future.

W. H. Mellers.

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[1]Satie makes use of the ' popular ' material available in his environment in many of his serious works, of course—notably in the exquisite polkas and ragtimes in *Parade, Mercure* and *Sports et Divertissements* ; but I am speaking here of the works which he wrote deliberately as occasional music, an occupation to which he devoted himself with a characteristically single-minded awareness of the relationship between the contemporary artist and his environment. No composer seems to have followed up Satie's extremely suggestive hints in this direction. The film music of composers like Bliss and Walton is very disappointing ; the possibilities indicated in Satie's *Entracte cinématographique*—depending on a uniform but remarkably subtle interaction of ' incidental ' rhythmic and harmonic ' figures ' with tender, periodically repeated melodic motifs—remain totally unexplored.

'ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA' AND 'ALL FOR LOVE'

A CRITICAL EXERCISE

> '*All for Love* is beyond doubt a proud and lovely masterpiece ; it is the fine flower of Dryden's genius. It was at one time, indeed for a very long time, fashionable to decry it in comparison with *Antony and Cleopatra*, but Dryden was not trying to do at all the same kind of thing as Shakespeare. Free opinion will be forced to admit that though Shakespeare's play contains finer poetry than Dryden could ever write—as he would have been the first to admit—Dryden's has a more tragic effect.'

I take this from the Introduction to the 'World's Classics' volume of *Restoration Tragedies*, and I take it as representative. The critical position would not be generally found surprising either in the academic world or in the world of literary fashions (the critic, Professor Bonamy Dobrée, has standing in both). So, though to myself Dryden and Shakespeare seem to be doing things so different in kind as to make a serious and sustained comparison obviously impossible, the quotation serves to countenance me in offering to enforce this view critically by way of illustrative exercise—a suggestion of critical method.

The superiority in poetry that makes it seem to me absurd to compare the two plays in tragic effect (not to speak of attributing the other superiority to Dryden) is conclusively manifest in the first twenty lines of *Antony and Cleopatra*. It is an immediately felt superiority in the life of the verse—superiority in concreteness, variety and sensitiveness—that leaves us with 'eloquence' instead of 'life' as the right word for Dryden's verse. This superiority asserts itself everywhere ; it is a matter of the general texture of the play, and could in spoken discussion be exemplified point by point in the least eloquent and exalted places. Nevertheless, the exigencies of written criticism dictate the choice of some

sustained passage, where demonstration can be effected with force and economy. There is an obvious choice, and it will, in fact, serve peculiarly well:

Enobarbus: I will tell you.
The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burn'd on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd all description: she did lie
In her pavilion—cloth of gold, of tissue—
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature: on each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fans, whose winds did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did.

Agrippa: O, rare for Antony!

Enobarbus: Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes,
And made their bends adornings: at the helm
A seeming mermaid steers: the silken tackle
Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands,
That yarely frame the office. From the barge
A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
Her people out upon her; and Antony,
Enthroned i' the market-place, did sit alone,
Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too
And made a gap in nature.

How does that look in comparison with Dryden's rendering of it?

Antony : To clear her self,
For sending him no Aid, she came from Egypt.
Her Gally down the Silver Cydnos row'd,
The Tackling Silk, the Streamers wav'd with Gold,
The gentle Winds were lodg'd in Purple Sails:
Her Nymphs, like Nereids, round her Couch, were plac'd ;
Where she, another Sea-born Venus, lay.

Dollabella : No more: I would not hear it.

Antony : O, you must!
She lay, and leant her Cheek upon her Hand,
And cast a Look so languishingly sweet,
As if, secure of all Beholders Hearts,
Neglecting she could take 'em: Boys, like Cupids,
Stood fanning, with their painted Wings, the Winds
That plaid about her Face: But if she smil'd,
A darting Glory seem'd to blaze abroad:
That Mens desiring Eyes were never weary'd ;
But hung upon the Object: to soft Flutes
The Silver Oars kept Time ; and while they plaid,
The Hearing gave new Pleasure to the Sight ;
And both to Thought: 'twas Heav'n or somewhat more ;
For she so charm'd all Hearts, that gazing Crowds
Stood panting on the shore, and wanted Breath
To give their welcome Voice.

It should be plain that a formal comparison is hardly possible ; Dryden's version offers in itself little lodgment for detailed commentary, and must serve mainly as a foil to the Shakespearean passage. The juxtaposition invites us to point to this, that and the other in Shakespeare and note that Dryden offers nothing corresponding. Our general observation is that Shakespeare's verse seems to enact its meaning, to do and to give rather than to talk about, whereas Dryden's is merely descriptive eloquence. The characteristic Shakespearean life asserts itself in Enobarbus's opening lines:

The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burn'd on the water . . .

—The assonantal sequence, ' barge '—' burnish'd '—' burn'd,' is alien in spirit to Dryden's handling of the medium (it reminds us of Hopkins who, though he has a technical deliberateness of his own, is, in his use of English, essentially Shakespearean). The effect is to give the metaphor ' burn'd ' a vigour of sensuous realization that it wouldn't otherwise have had ; the force of ' burn ' is reflected back through ' burnish'd ' (felt now as ' burning ' too) upon ' barge,' so that the barge takes fire, as it were, before our eyes: we are much more than merely told that the barge ' burn'd.' Further, the assonantal repetition, following immediately upon the quiet

I will tell you,

has the effect of the ejaculatory superlative—the tone explicit in

It beggar'd all description.

Even if, by the way, this ' beggar'd ' is not, here, an original metaphorical creation (though the *New English Dictionary* gives this as the earliest instance of the phrase), we feel it as such ; as we take it in its context the surrounding life seems to inform it, so that there is an effect of re-creation, in spite of our familiarity with the phrase as a *cliché*.

But there has, before this, been something else to notice. Shakespeare's superiority over Dryden is not merely an affair of metaphors ; it is equally observable—if not as amenable to written commentary—in tone and movement. These too exhibit Shakespeare's marvellous power of realization, of making language create and enact instead of merely saying and relating. There is in them a life corresponding to—bound up with—the metaphorical life. We become aware of it as sensitive variation. As already noted, the narrator's introductory

I will tell you

sets off by contrast the restrained-intense of the assonantal passage, in which the thing described seems present and not merely told of. In

the poop was beaten gold

there is relaxation ; we slip back into telling, the ' was ' getting its full value. But with the succeeding inversion (in which the verb is omitted)—

Purple the sails

—we have again the tone of immediacy, and in the next clause the superlative intensity is explicit. After this

the oars were silver

comes as a relapse into mere telling, into narration at a distance. What it introduces is an effect of movement that may be said to be implicitly of the order of metaphor ; while there is nothing obviously mimetic in the rhythm, the water following faster seems to be more than told about, it seems to be enacted :

the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes.

—The relapse into comment in this last line sets off the amorous eagerness of the water, which is conveyed observably by the even hurry of

and made
The water which they beat to follow faster . . .

The fluid movement of this (overflowing the line-division) we see, again, to be enhanced by the preceding succession of stressed and consonantally packed monosyllables :

Which to the tune of flútes képt stróke . . .

These three rigid-seeming stresses suggest both the oars and the strokes which the hurrying water follows (it is, perhaps, well to say again that there is nothing directly and simply mimetic—*e.g.* no approach to the rhythm of rowing ; the suggestive process is a subtler matter).

This kind of action in the verse (if ' kind ' does not misrepresent, for there is indefinite variety) cannot be done justice to in written analysis. In the mature Shakespeare it is pervasive, but it can be fixed on for convincing comment only where the

working is comparatively simple and obvious. At the most obvious we have this:

> With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
> To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
> And what they undid did.

—The 'undid did,' with its repetition that is at the same time reversal, plainly enacts the sense. But even this effect owes its full force to the movement of the preceding three or four lines, which is not so easily annotated. Here, then, is what as much as the metaphorical life makes the difference between Shakespeare's poetry and Dryden's eloquence.

One aspect of the difference is that Dryden's text would give little lodgment to the commentator who finds so much to explain or puzzle over in Shakespeare's. Not that there would appear to be any notable crux in the passage under examination. The Arden editor, however, does find a difficult one here:

> Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
> So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes,
> And made their bends adornings . . .

—Against this last line ('this much vexed passage') there is a note directing the reader to an appendix. Perhaps it is a long untroubled familiarity with the passage that makes me, after reading the half-dozen large pages of the appendix, unable to see that any vexing was necessary. At any rate, the obvious meaning still seems to me obviously the intended one: the stylized deference—movements, gestures, obeisances—of the attendant gentlewomen as they wait upon Cleopatra plays up to the *décor* in a kind of ballet ('adornings,' the verbal form, is clearly the right word for movement and action).

The lines that follow exemplify well Shakespeare's characteristic sensuous strength:

> at the helm
> A seeming mermaid steers: the silken tackle
> Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands,
> That yarely frame the office. From the barge
> A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
> Of the adjacent wharfs.

—The tactual imagery of the second clause derives its strength partly from contrast: the hard and energetic associations of tackle (they are not overtly felt as such, but are transformed, as it were, into their opposite) give the adjective 'silken' a strength of sensuous evocation that it would not otherwise have had. 'Tackle' here, no doubt, is inclusive, and it is the sails that swell; so that to feel, as I have done (and do still), that the verb makes the reader's hand grasp and compress the silken rope was perhaps a mere private vagary. Yet the 'touches' insist that 'tackle' (to which they are drawn by alliteration) also includes here what it ordinarily denotes—hands take hold of cordage, and it seems impossible to dissociate 'swell' from the tactual effect. The hands are made more 'flower-soft' by the contrasting 'yarely,' with its suggestion of brisk seamanlike efficiency ('ay, ay!').

In the next sentence the explicit 'strange' is curiously enforced by 'invisible': we shouldn't expect visibility in a perfume, and the unexpected adjective (intimating, no doubt, that there was no smoke or vapour to see) adds to the suggestion of a mysterious spell. The contrast between 'perfume' and the associations of 'wharfs' itself 'hits the sense,' and 'hits,' taken simultaneously with the soft suggestions of 'perfumes,' has already an oddly immediate force. The whole phrase—

> A strange invisible perfume *hits the sense*
> *Of the adjacent wharfs*

conveys the multitudinous impersonality of the packed masses of onlookers:

> The city cast
> Her people out upon her . . .

What follows—

> and Antony,
> Enthron'd i' the market-place, did sit alone,
> Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
> Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too
> And made a gap in nature

—comes as an invitation to make the shift from considering verse as verse to the plane on which we discuss 'characters.'

Dryden's Antony couldn't have sat in the market-place whistling to the air ; his dignity wouldn't have permitted it. Or rather, to ask whether he could or not is to introduce a criterion of reality in the presence of which he doesn't exist. His Cleopatra couldn't have hopped in the public street, or anywhere. His tragic *personæ* exist only in a world of stage-postures ; decorum gone, everything is gone. Shakespeare's have a life corresponding to the life of the verse ; the life in them is, in fact, the life of the verse. Correspondingly, his poem as drama—in situation, larger rhythm, cumulative effect—has an actuality, a richness and a depth in comparison with which it becomes absurd to discuss Dryden's play as tragedy. It is, of course, understood that in a sustained reading Shakespeare's poetry conveys an organization such as cannot be examined in an extracted passage. But the passage analysed exhibits representatively the difference from Dryden.

About Dryden's rendering there is nothing to say except that it has none of the poetic—and that is, we have seen, the dramatic—life of the original. It is accomplished verse, and verse that lends itself to stage-delivery, but it is hardly poetry. It is not poetry, in the sense that it is not the product of a realizing imagination working from within a deeply and minutely felt theme. Dryden is a highly skilled craftsman, working at his job from the outside. The superior structure with which his play is credited as a theatre-piece is a matter of workmanship of the same external order as is represented by his verse. He aims at symmetry, a neat and obvious design, a balanced arrangement of heroic confrontations and 'big scenes.' The satisfaction he offers his audience is that of an operatic exaltation and release from actuality, a ballet-like completeness of pattern, and an elegantly stylized decorum.

It may, of course, be urged on his behalf that he does not offer a poetic concentration comparable with Shakespeare's, but exhibits his strength only to the more inclusive view, in more spacious relations, so that it is peculiarly unfair to represent him, as above, in a short passage. To this it must be replied that his quality is still the quality of his verse, his virtue still a matter of taste, judgment and workmanship. The point may be fairly coercively made by an observation regarding what, in Dryden's verse, takes the place of the life of metaphor and imagery in Shakespeare's. What we find, when we can put a finger on any-

thing, is almost invariably either a formal simile, or a metaphor that is a simile with the ' like ' or the ' as ' left out. The choice is so wide and the showing so uniform that illustration must be random:

> He could resolve his mind, as Fire does Wax,
> From that hard rugged Image, melt him down,
> And mould him in what softer form he pleas'd.

> And yet the Soul, shut up in her dark Room,
> Viewing so clear abroad, at home sees nothing ;
> But, like a Mole in Earth, busie and blind,
> Works all her folly up and casts it outward
> To the Worlds open view.

> the least kind word, or glance,
> You give this Youth, will kindle him with Love.
> Then, like a burning Vessel set adrift,
> You'll send him down amain before the wind,
> To fire the Heart of jealous Antony.

> With fiery Eyes, and with contracted Brows,
> He Coyn'd his Face in the severest stamp:
> And fury shook his Fabrick like an Earthquake ;
> He heav'd for vent, and burst like bellowing Aetna,
> In Sounds scarce humane . . .

> I find your Breast fenc'd round from humane reach,
> Transparent as a Rock of solid Chrystal ;
> Seen through, but never pierc'd.
> But I am made a shallow-forded Stream,
> Seen to the Bottom: all my clearness scorn'd,
> And all my Faults expos'd!

The structure, it will be seen, is always that of simple, illustrative, point-by point correspondence. One analogy may give way to another, and so again, but the shift is always clean and obvious ; there is never any complexity, confusion or ambiguity. When there is development, it is simple, lucid and rational.

This habit of expression manifests plainly the external approach, the predominance of taste and judgment. It is an approach equally apparent in the treatment of emotion in what are meant to be the especially moving places—as, for instance, in the scene in which Octavia and the children are loosed upon Antony:

> *Antony:* Oh, Dollabella, which way shall I turn?
> I find a secret yielding in my Soul;
> But Cleopatra, who would die with me,
> Must she be left? Pity pleads for Octavia
> But does it not plead more for Cleopatra?
> . . . . . .
> [*Here the Children go to him, etc.*
>
> *Ventidius:* Was ever sight so moving! Emperor!
> *Dollabella:* Friend.
> *Octavia:* Husband!
> *Both Children:* Father!
> *Antony:* I am vanquished: take me,
> Octavia; take me, Children; share me all.
> (*Embracing them*).

—The emotion doesn't emerge from a given situation realized in its concrete particularity; it is stated, not presented or enacted. The explicitness is of the kind that betrays absence of realization.

It would be unprofitable to carry the show of formal comparison any further: the terms, it is plain, are too disparate. And it should be plain too that we needn't take the disparateness as an excuse for the implication that judgments of comparative value are out of place. They are only out of place in the sense that they should hardly need making explicitly. But they do need making when it is urged that, though Shakespeare's play contains fine poetry, Dryden's has a more tragic effect. It doesn't, of course, follow that, because it becomes impossible to talk seriously about tragic effect or of 'characters' in connection with Dryden's play when Shakespeare's is placed by it, *Antony and Cleopatra* is among Shakespeare's greatest tragedies. In fact, there seem good

grounds for some such conclusion as A. C. Bradley came to.[1] Nevertheless, *Antony and Cleopatra* is a very great dramatic poem, and if the comparison with *All for Love* is proposed it can be seriously taken up only as an approach to Shakespeare—a way of setting off the character of the Shakespearean genius.

It might, for instance, be an introduction to the study of Shakespeare's imagery. Commentators on Shakespeare's text too commonly betray a notion of metaphor that would make Dryden's practice the standard, and one might start with the Arden editor's note on

> the bellows and the fan
> To cool a gipsy's lust:

' Johnson suggests *to kindle and to cool*, misled by the usual use of bellows ; for which, as a cooling implement . . . ' etc. It would be fair to comment here that even when Shakespeare's metaphors are most like Dryden's he cannot be counted on to exhibit the same tidiness, and that there is no need to establish the use of bellows as a cooling implement. It seems probable that, though Johnson's emendation is unnecessary, he takes the meaning rightly, and that the effect here is much that of ' undid did.' If that is so Shakespeare's metaphor is, characteristically, less simple, as well as less tidy, than one of Dryden's.

We might then pass to one that, though it is not more difficult, we recognize immediately as not of Dryden's kind:

> Her tongue will not obey her heart, nor can
> Her heart inform her tongue—the swan's down-feather
> That stands upon the swell at the full of tide,
> And neither way inclines.

As the Arden editor notes: ' It is not clear whether Octavia's heart is the swan's down-feather, swayed neither way on the full tide of emotion . . . or whether it is merely the *inaction* of heart and tongue . . . which is compared to that of the feather.'—Dryden would not have left it not clear. And Dryden could not have evoked the appropriate dramatic feeling with that vividness and

[1]See *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*.

particularity. When we try to say in what ways the passage is incomparably superior to anything Dryden could have produced, we have to think of metaphor as something more immediate, complex and organic than neat illustrative correspondence. And as we pass from example to example in *Antony and Cleopatra* it becomes less and less easy to suppose that a neat line can be drawn round the study.

F. R. Leavis.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

EDITORIAL NOTE

With this number *Scrutiny* reaches the middle of its fifth year, and we think it will be agreed that it has done so without any lowering of standards and without falling uncondonably short of the inaugural undertaking. That it performs an important function we are encouraged to believe by the recognition it has won wherever English is read. It has become an institution, and has provided the stimulus for the founding of at least two other serious periodicals. But sales are far from commensurate with influence—or circulation: one copy goes through many pairs of hands. Not that we regret such patronage as we enjoy from libraries and public reading-rooms: on the contrary we urge sympathizers to take every opportunity they may find of persuading such institutions to subscribe to *Scrutiny*. But we need too the fullest personal support of individual sympathizers. There are many who do not realize the difference, from our point of view, between the casual purchase of separate numbers and the steady assured support that can be counted on beforehand.

We need, then, more subscriptions, and the conversion of some of the goodwill *Scrutiny* enjoys into more active support. And we shall be grateful for propagandist efforts.

We have to express our warmest thanks to a supporter who recently gave a welcome £3 in aid of *Scrutiny* finances.

T. S. ELIOT, 1925 - 1935

COLLECTED POEMS 1909-1935, by T. S. Eliot (Faber and Faber, 7/6 net).

This new volume is an opportunity, not for a review—for ' The Poetry of T. S. Eliot ' begins to have the intimidating sound of a Tripos question—but for asking whether anything in the development of the poetry accounts for the change in attitude that has made Mr. Eliot's work less *chic* now than it was ten years ago. Perhaps the ten years are a sufficient explanation—obvious changes in fashionable feeling have helped to make the sort-of-communist poets popular. But on the other hand it may be that these poets gratify some taste that Mr. Eliot also gratified in his earlier work but not in his later. If so it is surely a taste for evocations of the sense of protest that our circumstances set up in us ; for it seems likely that at the present time it is expressions of protest in some form or other that most readily gain a poet popular sympathy. And up to *The Waste Land* and *The Hollow Men* this protest—whether distressed, disgusted, or ironical—was still the dominant note of Mr. Eliot's work, through all the subtlety and sensitiveness of the forms it took. Yet already in these two poems the suggestion was creeping in that the sufferers were also failures. We are the hollow men, but there are, besides,

> Those who have crossed
> With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom

And in all the later work the stress tends to fall on the regret or suffering that arises from our own choices or our inherent limitations, or on the resignation that they make necessary. Without at the moment trying to define the change more closely one can point out certain characteristics of the later work which are likely to displease those who create the fashions of taste in poetry to-day, and which also contrast with Mr. Eliot's earlier work. First it is true that in some of the poems (most obviously in the Choruses from *The Rock*) there are denunciation and preaching, both of which people like just now. But there is a vital difference between the denunciation here and that, say, in *The Dog Beneath the Skin*: Mr. Eliot doesn't invite you to step across a dividing

line and join him in guaranteed rightness—he suggests at the most that you and he should both try, in familiar and difficult ways, not to live so badly. Failing to make it sound easy, and not putting much stress on the fellowship of the just, he offers no satisfaction to the craving for a life that is ethically and emotionally *simpler*.

And this characteristic goes with a deeper change of attitude that separates the later work from the earlier. Besides displaying little faith in a revolt against anything outside himself, Mr. Eliot in his recent work never invites you to believe that everything undesirable in you is due to outside influences that can be blamed for tampering with your original rightness. Not even in the perhaps over-simple ' Animula ' is there any suggestion that the ' simple soul ' has suffered an avoidable wrong for which someone else can be given the blame. Mr. Eliot declines to sanction an implicit belief, almost universally held, which lies behind an immense amount of rationalization, self-pity and childish protest—the belief that the very fact of being alive ought to ensure your being a satisfactory object in your own sight. He is nearer the more rational view that the process of living is at its best one of progressive dissatisfaction.

Throughout the earlier poems there are traces of what, if it were cruder and without irony and impersonality, would be felt at once as self-pity or futile protest: for example,

> Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life.
> The last twist of the knife.

or,

> Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh ;
> The worlds revolve like ancient women
> Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

or again,

> The nightingales are singing near
> The Convent of the Sacred Heart,
>
> And sang within the bloody wood
> When Agamemnon cried aloud,
> And let their liquid siftings fall
> To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

Obviously this is only one aspect of the early poetry, and to lay much stress on it without qualification would be grotesquely unfair to ' Gerontion ' especially and to other poems of that phase. But it is a prominent enough aspect of the work to have made critics, one might have thought, more liable to underrate the earlier poems than, with fashionable taste, the later ones. For there can be no doubt of the greater maturity of feeling in the later work:

> And I pray that I may forget
> These matters that with myself I too much discuss
> Too much explain
> Because I do not hope to turn again
> Let these words answer
> For what is done, not to be done again
> May the judgment not be too heavy upon us

This may be called religious submission, but essentially it is the submission of maturity.

What is peculiar to Mr. Eliot in the tone of his work, and not inherent in maturity or in religion, is that he does *submit* to what he knows rather than welcoming it. To say that his is a depressed poetry isn't true, because of the extraordinary toughness and resilience that always underlie it. They show, for instance, in the quality of the scorn he expresses for those who have tried to overlook what he sees:

> . . . the strained time-ridden faces
> Distracted from distraction by distraction
> Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
> Tumid apathy with no concentration
> Men and bits of paper . . .

But to insist on the depression yields a half-truth. For though acceptance and understanding have taken the place of protest the underlying experience remains one of suffering, and the renunciation is much more vividly communicated than the advance for the sake of which it was made. It is summed up in the ending of ' Ash Wednesday ':

Blessèd sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit
of the garden,
Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still
Even among these rocks,
Our peace in His will
And even among these rocks
Sister, mother
And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,
Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee.

This is the cry of the weaned child, I suppose the analysts might say ; and without acquiescing in the genetic view that they would imply one can agree that weaning stands as a type-experience of much that Mr. Eliot is interested in as a poet. It seems to be the clearer and more direct realization of this kind of experience that makes the later poems at the same time more personal and more mature. And in the presence of these poems many who liked saying they liked the earlier work feel both embarrassed and snubbed.

However, all of this might be said about a volume of collected sermons instead of poems. It ignores Mr. Eliot's amazing genius in the use of words and rhythms and his extraordinary fertility in styles of writing, each ' manner ' apparently perfected from the first and often used only once (only once, that is, by Mr. Eliot, though most are like comets with a string of poetasters laboriously tailing after them). One aspect of his mastery of language may perhaps be commented on here because it reaches its most remarkable expression in the latest of the poems, ' Burnt Norton.' Here most obviously the poetry is a linguistic achievement, in this case an achievement in the creation of concepts.

Ordinarily our abstract ideas are over-comprehensive and include too wide a range of feeling to be of much use by themselves. If our words ' regret ' and ' eternity ' were exact bits of mosaic with which to build patterns much of ' Burnt Norton ' would not have had to be written. But

> . . . Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still.

One could say, perhaps, that the poem takes the place of the ideas of 'regret' and 'eternity.' Where in ordinary speech we should have to use those words, and hope by conversational trial-and-error to obviate the grosser misunderstandings, this poem is a newly-created concept, equally abstract but vastly more exact and rich in meaning. It makes no statement. It is no more 'about' anything than an abstract term like 'love' is about anything: it is a linguistic creation. And the creation of a new concept, with all the assimilation and communication of experience that that involves, is perhaps the greatest of linguistic achievements.

In this poem the new meaning is approached by two methods. The first is the presentation of concrete images and definite events, each of which is checked and passes over into another before it has developed far enough to stand meaningfully by itself. This it, of course, an extension of a familiar language process. If you try to observe introspectively how the meaning of an abstract term—say 'trade'—exists in your mind, you find that after a moment of blankness, in which there seems to be only imageless 'meaning,' concrete images of objects and events begin to occur to you; but none by itself carries the full meaning of the word 'trade,' and each is faded out and replaced by another. The abstract concept, in fact, seems like a space surrounded and defined by a more or less rich collection of latent ideas. It is this kind of definition that Mr. Eliot sets about here—in the magnificent first section for instance—with every subtlety of verbal and rhythmical suggestion.

And the complementary method is to make pseudo-statements in highly abstract language, for the purpose, essentially, of putting forward and immediately rejecting ready-made concepts that might have seemed to approximate to the concept he is creating. For instance:

> Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
> But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity.

Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from
nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline.

Or

Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
Not that only, but the co-existence,
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.

And all is always now.

In neither of these methods is there any attempt to state the meaning by taking existing abstract ideas and piecing them together in the ordinary way. Where something approaching this more usual method is attempted, in the passage beginning ' The inner freedom from the practical desire,' it seems a little less successful ; admirable for the plays, where the audience is prominent, it fails to combine quite perfectly with the other methods of this poem. But it is Mr. Eliot himself who, by the closeness of his approach to technical perfection, provides a background against which such faint flaws can be seen.

D. W. HARDING.

TWENTIETH CENTURY BUNYANS

ANDREAS or THE UNITED. Fragments of a Novel by Hugo von Hofmannsthal (Dent, 8/6).

This remarkable volume consists of one finished chapter, and a number of notes, drafts and outlines, for the author's rather than the reader's guidance, for the rest of the novel. Anyone interested in the fragments left by Franz Kafka will recognize a work of a similar tendency. Like *The Castle* it is a modern *Pilgrim's Progress*. The pilgrim, Andreas, is sent by his parents from his home in eighteenth century Vienna on a tour as a means to reach 'the happiness of life.' The book opens with his arrival in Venice, and previous adventures are told retrospectively. The theme is suggested in a note—' Andreas: two halves which gape asunder.—Andreas's character not, of itself, settled: he must first find himself in these vicissitudes . . . Andreas: main line, courage—the courage which the atmosphere of Venice incorporates, courage in the night of storm. Moral courage.' Just as Vienna and Andreas's home stand for the merely worldly life ' (everything Austrian is mean, the hordes of chamberlains, everything in masses. In Vienna, the chief concern of everybody is to be taken for somebody),' so eighteenth century Venice is a symbolic setting for the soul's drama—' For him [the Knight] Venice is the fusion of the classical world and the Orient ; the impossibility, in Venice, of relapsing into the trivial, the unmeaning.' At Venice Andreas encounters the Knight of Malta who is to become his spiritual instructor—' The essence of his being a knowledge of the secret of human organization ' ; Andreas has ' to learn from the Knight to discern what has real existence, to overcome the mean.' The various persons and social settings Andreas mixes with represent different levels of being or sometimes elements of the soul in isolation ; from each adventure Andreas emerges better equipped to ' find himself.'

Hofmannsthal's distinction, as far as one can infer from so little data, lies in being a novelist at the same time as he is a theorist, he is able to translate his symbols into art and by an unusual command of the novelist's machinery to

play directly on the emotions of the reader. ' Threads ran to and fro, and out of them a world was woven, behind the real one, and not so empty and desolate.'—He can make such a generalization concretely convincing, so much so that the finished chapter makes one wonder whether this genre is actually distinct from the novel of ' real ' life. The writing is rich, solid and highly-charged, as opposed to Kafka's which is colourless, elusive and unbrokenly flowing with apparently a deliberate avoidance of emphasis, and Hofmannsthal has a correspondingly different sense of what constitutes existence. It is interesting to compare these two writers, but *Andreas*, if more had been finished, might have been more comparable with *The Root and the Flower*, so completely is the ethical argument conducted in terms of social drama and emotional experience. Hofmannsthal's mystical outfit is much less eccentric than at first appears: the Rosicrucianism and eighteenth century Venice are not romantic trappings in the least—and how easily they might have been with another novelist! They simply prove to be, like the India of Akbar for Myers, a convenient way of achieving timeless contemporaneity—the draft for the Knight's character states that he ' moves in a time which is not quite the present, and in a place which is not completely here.' The reader will probably get something from these pregnant fragments only in proportion to what he brings to them, though this applies in some degree to all compositions of this type. But neither Kafka nor Hofmannsthal could be expected to dot their i's like Bunyan, nor, as Mr. Edwin Muir observes in his introduction to *The Castle*, can a twentieth century *Pilgrim's Progress* reveal so clear a path and so distinct a goal. It is not an accident that *The Castle* and *Andreas* are both incomplete. Everyone who is disgusted with the triviality of our regular fiction will be grateful to Miss Marie Hottinger, whose skill must largely account for so successful a translation, and to Messrs. Dent for their excellent though rather expensive production.

MR. ALDOUS HUXLEY

EYELESS IN GAZA, by Aldous Huxley (Chatto and Windus, 10/6).

Mr. Peter Quennell recently wrote (in a book reviewed in the last number of *Scrutiny*): ' Huxley, supremely intelligent, appears to suffer from the very complexity of his apparatus.' This, as one might expect, is an echo of the stock Bloomsbury account of Huxley. His ' intelligence ' is popularly considered to be so great that it inhibits his other powers as novelist, particularly his ability to ' feel ' ; this account is supposed to explain what it is that even Mr. Quennell feels to be wrong with Mr. Huxley's novels. But supreme intelligence in other literary artists—Shakespeare, Blake, for instance—is not a handicap or disability: on the contrary, it is the condition of their outstanding achievement. It is obvious that ' intelligence ' here needs examining. There must be different kinds of intelligence and Mr. Huxley's an inferior and inherently defective kind.

The generally accepted explanation of Huxley's fatally supreme intelligence originates, it is of interest to note, with Mr. Huxley himself. What he had hinted earlier and made explicit in *Point Counter Point* (in the character of Philip the novelist-protagonist) is repeated in his new novel, though Anthony, the new hero, is only writing an amateur literary *Elements of Sociology* ; nevertheless we read again of ' the temperamental divorce between the passions and the intellect,' etc., and we are repeatedly given to understand that though the feeling powers are admittedly weak the intellect is first-class. There is an instructive instance in Chapter VI of *Point Counter Point* of the way Mr. Huxley's intellect functions and the value the reader is instructed to place upon it. There is only space to quote the conclusion:

> ' . . . A poor starved pariah dog had its back broken under the wheels and the incident evoked from Philip a selection from the vital statistics of Sicily, a speculation about the relativity of morals, a brilliant psychological generalization. It was amusing, it was unexpected, it was wonderfully interesting ; but oh! she almost wanted to scream.'

Philip's wife wanted to scream because her husband's mental processes struck her as being inhuman, but some readers may with more justice object that the product is not brilliant, nor wonderfully interesting, and that Mr. Huxley's *procédé* is not even amusing for very long. In a novelist it is a form of laziness: a Henry James, a Stendhal or a Flaubert dissolves his general ideas into his particular material—their novels are saturated solutions, whereas Mr. Huxley's are a preposterous mixture like the White Knight's pudding. This extract also betrays our novelist's over-estimate of his own bright ideas—for of course Philip's intellect, like Mr. Huxley's, works by stringing together in a rapid conversational way dubious generalizations from other people's printed conclusions. *Il prend son bien où il le trouve*, and he doesn't risk looking the *trouvaille* in the mouth. On inspection his learning is found to be painlessly acquired like his information from such obvious sources as encyclopædias, the scientific best-sellers, the current popular sociological, psychological, anthropological, etc. works, the more expensive and less well-known equivalents of Benn's sixpenny series (if, on reading *Eyeless in Gaza*, you notice that he has been using *Patterns of Culture* as a source-book, you will equally reflect that it is just the sort of book he finds useful and congenial) ; nor does he discriminate between one borrowed theory and another, all grist. He remarks himself (*Eyeless in Gaza*, p. 171) that this is a form of laziness and self-indulgence, and continues, characteristically, to include in this charge all ' Higher Lifers ' : scholars, philosophers, and men of science—all are rather contemptible escapists. He asserts that all intellectual efforts are identical in kind with his own undisciplined and slipshod filching of other people's labours. Of course it is impossible to tell how far this too may be merely an irresponsible bright idea. But ' sincerity ' at this level can mean nothing ; it doesn't signify.

Mr. Huxley's intelligence looks like being merely a matter of a great deal of reading and a great deal of note-taking (significant that all the novelists in his books take copious notes of ideas and extracts to be worked up into their texts) combined of course with a natural flair for picking up superficially impressive ideas. This goes along with his flair for embodying the Zeitgeist, and it is cheering to see how the naughty nasty short-story writer of the 'twenties has become the earnest essayist of the 'thirties.

The serious element in *Eyeless in Gaza* is represented by a crusade for an academic kind of pacifism based on the Shelleyan or *Prometheus Unbound* perfectionism (see pp. 170-1). However, we are not here concerned with this but with the novel to whose tail it is very clumsily and perfunctorily tied. As a piece of fiction it reveals the death-throes of a novelist. Mr. Huxley is so bored with it that the characterization and bits of experience are for the most part merely repetitions of those used in previous novels of Mr. Huxley and other people ; they don't even come out of a new note-book. This sterility of invention is the nemesis of the novelist who has chosen to resort to books instead of to life for his raw material. It is the logical result of the boredom with and contempt for humanity so evident in *Beyond the Mexique Bay*, and of course to a less degree in his previous novels and stories. The novelist who is bored is also, inevitably, boring.

Mr. Huxley's defects of intelligence are seen to be the source of his defects as novelist (thus contradicting the orthodox account of his make-up). There is no relation between his bright ideas (his ' intelligence ') and his sensibility, so his technique accordingly remains a matter of bright ideas too. His ' technique ' in the text-book sense was always a matter of lifting dodges from Gide and Proust and applying them from outside ; in the present novel the by no means new device of the time-shift is used quite arbitrarily and in practice merely to the reader's confusion. As for technique in the important sense, the incompetence here is pronounced. For instance, if the social drama part of the new fiction and of *Point Counter Point* serves any end, it must be to expose the futility of the lives of the pleasure-chasing members of the opulent classes ; any novelist who takes so many words to achieve so simple an effect ought to read the novels of Mr. Evelyn Waugh and blush for himself. At showing the middlebrow fear in a handful of dust Mr. Waugh outclasses Mr. Huxley every time. And Mr. Huxley's radical defect as a novelist, his lack of interest in the novelist's raw material, is responsible for his insensitiveness to speech and emotional idiom ; his characters are indentifiable if at all by gross verbal mannerisms, and Mr. Wyndham Lewis, in a pamphlet *Have With You To Great Queen Street*, reproducing the first page of *Point Counter Point*, remarked with justice that it might nearly all come from a penny novelette.

The one hopeful sign in *Eyeless in Gaza* is that Mr. Huxley represents his hero Anthony as turning, if only on theoretical grounds, from the *Antic Hay* attitude to his fellows—the attitude of would-be scientific contempt (' My original conception was of a vast *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, constructed of historical facts. A picture of futility, apparently objective, scientific, but composed, I realize, in order to justify my own way of life. If men had always behaved either like half-wits or baboons, if they couldn't behave otherwise, then I was justified in sitting comfortably in the stalls with my opera-glasses. Whereas if there were something to be done, if the behaviour could be modified . . . ')—to a use of ' his raw material of life, thought, knowledge ' as a means, apparently, in the service of humanity. The writer who has taken up for so many years the stalls-and-opera-glasses position can hardly be outstandingly intelligent, nor equipped with the understanding and courage that are the accompaniments of real intelligence in an artist. The inability to follow up any line of thought, to resolve his bright ideas beyond the elementary stage of indiscriminate acquisition, has produced Mr. Huxley's notable distaste for committing himself to any position. His characters, it is generally recognized, mostly represent positions Mr. Huxley has liked to see himself in, was afraid of seeing himself in, or was trying himself out in. It is interesting to see how he protects himself against the possible charge of taking seriously any serious position he is advancing by loading the mouthpiece with some ridiculous characteristic (*e.g.* Brian Foxe's stammer). Mr. Quennell's distinction between thinking and feeling doesn't look very sensible.

Brave New World and some of the less pretentious essays are so much better than the ponderous novels because Mr. Huxley has had there, by the nature of the undertaking, to commit himself to a line and take serious thought in advance about where he was coming out. As literary critics it is our business to assess merely Mr. Huxley's possibilities as a man of letters. And it seems evident that Mr. Huxley's talents are not those of a novelist but of a populariser of ideas: this, if we had the reasonably serious large reading-public we have a right to expect after nearly seventy years of compulsory education, would be a function needing several hundred middlemen of Mr. Huxley's calibre, nor would the crop be difficult to raise. But in fact the market for such writers

disappeared with the old heavy reviews. There remains the public Mr. Huxley has secured ; with that his success depends on keeping up with the intellectual fashions and getting his wares early to market, for it is a public that is always looking for tips.

DUSTIER AND DUSTIER

THE WEATHER IN THE STREETS, by Rosamond Lehmann (Collins, 8/-).

Admirers of Miss Lehmann's first novel will be cheered to learn that her soul is still receiving dusty answers from life. In spite of the absence of romantic anguish in her second novel, *A Note in Music* (though the more discerning might have noticed that it was drawn not from life but from *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, a solemn exercise in Woolfian style and structure) and in its successor *Invitation to the Waltz* (a commonplace bodying-forth of a hackneyed subject that was simply not worth doing), yet *Dusty Answer*, to judge by her latest and most ambitious novel, represented the permanent cast of mind of this novelist whom Mr. Hugh Walpole declares to be ' the best of the younger generation of English novelists . . . at the head of the world of fiction that derives on the female side from Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield and on the male side from Joyce and Lawrence.' Every lustrum produces its *Sinister Street*, and *Dusty Answer*, best-seller of 1927, was an outstandingly comic example of the adolescent's novel of adolescence. Life at Girton has never within living memory borne any relation to Miss Lehmann's account of it, and the girls-school-story tone and style of her rendition place it the more certainly for what it is ; the dusty answer is only a final luxuriating in emotion, part of the quite undistinguished adolescent day-dream (notice the Byronic Julian and Roddy the schoolgirls' ideal).

The emotions of the extremely immature are her most congenial theme ; the new novel is her first attempt (*A Note in Music* not counting) to deal with adults. But the central couple—the heroine Olivia and her married lover Rollo—turn out to be no more mature emotionally and to have nothing more respectable in the way of personality than their earlier versions Judith and Roddy. The novel is told chiefly through the stream of consciousness

of the heroine, and as the author is never ironical about her (and Mrs. Woolf has shown that such a method does not exclude an ironic light from outside) we may assume that her troubles are to be taken at their face value. We are invited to pity the poor *rentière* who has often and often to spend the evening alone degradingly occupied in keeping up appearances—' mending stockings for to-morrow, washing brush and comb, cleaning stained linings of handbags . . . '—when she would so much prefer ' a full-dress event ' every night. [It is true she thinks this may have done her good, ' taught me a bit—about the way some people have to live.' Miss Lehmann clearly has no idea how most people have to live, and is the sort of bourgeois writer who encourages the feeling that a social revolution would be a healthy thing]. She is swept into an affair with a married man, and her subsequent anguishes boil down to the fact that she is not his wife and he doesn't want her to be, which she has no reason for not having known beforehand. What Olivia's soul really values, what she chiefly envies Rollo's wife for commanding (and Miss Lehmann, in spite of some uncertain satiric intentions about the landed gentry's outlook and some stronger-minded ones about the Victorian bourgeoisie's, does not dissociate herself) is square-cut emeralds and lovely stockings and smart tea-gowns to disguise pregnancy and enough money to afford a big town house full of ' really good modern rooms ' (designed for you, like the tea-gowns, by someone else) and social standing and a high-class good time. It is quite evident that Olivia wants to be Rollo's wife in order to lead the same kind of fatuous round of opulent existence as Nicola, the society beauty he is married to.

' She had her own money,' Olivia reflects of someone, ' and people with a bit of money were all right ' ; that is really the one deeply-felt value in the book, and alongside that innocently revealing piece of honesty the emotional drama doesn't look convincing. Emotional crises arising out of a passion for a Rollo or a Roddy even if credible are not of a kind to make us feel that a justifiable demand on our sympathies is being made. What Miss Lehmann's heroines apparently admire in a man is some form of masculine charm that can exist unaccompanied by character, intelligence, sensitiveness, a sense of responsibility, or even ordinary decency in personal relations, and accordingly her heroines are uniformly

represented as victims of an unaccountable if not contemptible passion.

But in fact all Miss Lehmann is concerned for is her dusty answer, never mind how it is secured: it is a stock article, like that old favourite the tragic view of life, of which it is just a more 'modern' variety. And those who like an opportunity to revel in that sort of thing won't question the means by which it is manufactured. Miss Lehmann appears to have nothing interesting to offer as a person ; as a novelist she is completely characterless. Rightly does Mr. Walpole deduce her descent from all the fashionable highbrow novelists, and as he points out, ' her cleverness does not offend you '—it is not the disquieting kind that demands re-orientation in the reader. Miss Lehmann is the pseudo-sophisticated would-be cynical actually sentimental emotionally vulgarising middlebrow novelist who goes down so well nowadays with the educated public. There is also practically everything else in this meaty novel that a Book Society subscriber could desire ; the modern child, for instance, and the best-seller's indispensable dog—they are not needed for the plot or used to further any artistic end, just to help along the 436 pages. Characters exhibit deep feeling by biting their thumbs, and amusement by wiping their eyes. Miss Lehmann is also a stylist: every so often there is a piece like this—' The full-sailing, torch-loaded chestnuts were caught, islanded in the pale blue-green Arctic fields of sky.' Mr. Walpole's further claim for her is that ' she is a modern and ironically-eyed woman.' I have already considered the sense in which she is a modern, and as for her ironic vision, the only irony in this novel not of the poor-spirited we-are-the-moderns variety is self-protective. Irony of that brand abounds in *The Weather in the Streets* and is characteristic ; for example, Olivia's ' I told him, *O Western wind when wilt thou blow ? That the small rain down may rain*, and he adored it and said it after me till he knew it. The darling, he's so sentimental.' This coheres with the other adolescent traits of this writer. The real mystery is not that Mr. Walpole and the great Boots public should have taken Miss Lehmann to their hearts, but that in France the leading English women novelists should be understood to be Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and Rosamond Lehmann. Too bad all round.

Q. D. Leavis.

LAGERKVIST

GUEST OF REALITY, by Pär Lagerkvist. Translated from the Swedish by Erik Mesterton and Denys W. Harding (Cape, 7/6).

Here are three short novels which give English readers a chance of scrutinizing Lagerkvist's work on, as it were, three landing-stages of development. ' The Eternal Smile,' which appeared separately, by the same translators, some eighteen months ago from Gordon Fraser's, Cambridge, dates back sixteen years. ' Guest of Reality,' a very different experiment in direct narrative, was published in 1925 ; and ' The Hangman,' with fascist violence as its theme, in 1933. The task of valuation has to face at the outset the fact that the landing-stages are set along no discernible route.

' An individual contemporary unattached to any school of literature, Pär Lagerkvist can only be watched at work without attempts at prophecy.' By this, of course, the translators would not be taken to mean that he is immune from the ordinary critical approach, which would indicate that his power of full-bodied narrative and uncommonly effective use of imagery have not yet been successfully directed to any artistic end. Not yet, since ' The Hangman ' is his latest work ; though one would like the opportunity of filling in what may be an important gap by reading the short stories which preceded it, a few of which were published in ' Modern Swedish Short Stories ' by the Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation two or three years ago. They ought at any rate to be worth a complete translation. So good is the work of those responsible for the present volume that one is almost spared the usual fear that there may be something important in the original which has failed to get through.

' Attempts at prophecy ' being denied to us, then—and they could not be very fruitful with this material—all that can be done is to look at each work separately and try to estimate what has been achieved. About ' The Eternal Smile ' one cannot agree with the dust-cover that it is ' a truly memorable work of art.' It is an allegory about life, death and God, and since it doesn't add anything to our relevant experience about life or death or God it must be said to have failed as art. The style succeeds in filling

its folk-narrative dress with body and vitality, but there is something curiously unsatisfying in its very virtues ; it is strenuous, but its activity often seems to be in a sub-normal channel, like a highly active brain dreaming. The dream imagery in the narrative is probably deliberate and is quite consistent with the idea of the dead recalling their earthly lives, and yet it is not easy to get away from the feeling that there has been a certain amount of angling after that ' something rich and strange ' (dust-cover) which is not really, after all, very close to Hans Andersen.

The prose virtues are better seen in ' Guest of Reality,' which tells without stridency or emotional indulgence about a sensitive boy's realization of youth as ' the most wretched age of man.' The narrative and descriptive passages are loaded with detail which in the hands of a less competent writer—half a dozen photographic ' realists ' spring to mind who have attempted this sort of thing badly—would make for unconscionable tedium. Here it is always kept in check, subordinated to the main design. The work of a cultivated and alert mind, functioning at an even if not an exalted level, this novel is as far as it goes the most successful of the three. But, also by a long way the least ambitious, it doesn't go very far.

It is to ' The Hangman ' that we come for the big guns (appropriately enough its date is that of Hitler's rise to power). The whole thing is in fact a thunder of indignation, too vociferous and laboured to be successful satire, too well-planned and powerful to be unimportant. The frame-work is good ; particularly well done is the shifting of the scene from a mediæval tavern with its grim but essentially human associations to a modern night-club where the brutal happenings of the story seem in no way out of place. There is every excuse for making National-Socialism the villain of the piece, but there doesn't seem much point in holding up the Hangman, symbol of bloodshed through the ages, as a kind of mystical hero. The trouble with this, as with ' The Eternal Smile,' is that it protests too much. Most of the Hangman's interminable harangue, like that of the Leader in the earlier story, is as gratuitous as a Shaw preface. But ' The Hangman ' is the most interesting work of the three, and seems to achieve the most in spite of its failures.

NORMAN SHRAPNEL.

THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION IN SCOTLAND

SCOTTISH JOURNEY, by Edwin Muir (Heinemann and Gollancz, 7/6).

IS SCOTLAND EDUCATED? by A. S. Neill (Routledge, 5/-).

SCOTLAND: THAT DISTRESSED AREA, by G. M. Thomson (Porpoise Press, 3/6).

LITERATURE AND OATMEAL, by William Power (Routledge, 5/-).

The appearance during the last year of a number of books about Scotland provides an occasion for a review of the cultural situation there. Mr. Edwin Muir and Mr. A. S. Neill from their different standpoints agree that it is desperate. Mr. G. M. Thomson is not concerned specifically with the cultural situation but with the economic situation and with showing that that also is desperate, whether or not there is any connection between the two. Mr. William Power alone is filled with hopefulness from some unknown source; his second last chapter is headed 'The Dawn Returns: Lang, Stevenson, The Kailyard, and Munro' and his triumphant last chapter seems an attempt to justify the blurb on his dust-wrapper, 'Literature to-day ranks almost with golf among the Nation's staple industries.'

It seems worth insisting upon one or two points that have already been insisted upon. There has of course been no Scottish literature and no literature of any kind in Scotland since the eighteenth century. There cannot be a Scottish literature in the fullest sense unless there is in the fullest sense a Scottish speech. There is no longer any such speech. What survives of dialect speech among what survives of the peasantry is in its last stages and is even something its speakers have come to be half-ashamed of. The dialects have been destroyed by forces, the most powerful of which operate not only in Scotland but throughout the modern world. What passes for Education has not been among the least lethal of these.

When a language is destroyed it is not only a language, it is a distinctive traditional life that is destroyed, and with it all forms of the traditional art that springs from that life. With the dialect speech has been destroyed everything that that speech represented. There is now very little that is distinctively Scottish in the life of the modern cities, Glasgow, Edinburgh. There is very little in the life of these cities that differs from the life of other cities of the modern world. The daily routine of the people in factory, office and shop, the distractions provided for their leisure, are not distinctive of Scotland. Some of the architecture of Edinburgh is indeed a monument of a past that was not without both distinctiveness and distinction, but to the great majority of its citizens is it now more than a monument and of a past that is for them past? The villages and farms that have not been drained into the industrial areas, which might be industrial areas anywhere in the modern world, have been drained into the cities, and what survives of them shares, with the aids of buses, wireless and cinemas (for even the little country towns have now their own cinemas) the ' life ' of the cities. In their turn the cities overflow into the country in motor-cars on fine days and make of it their recreation ground. The ' life ' the country witnesses on these days is a life alien to it, imposed upon it, disfiguring it. It is not the Scottish life of a Scottish country ; it is not even the Scottish life of Scottish cities. One can only conclude that there is no longer any positive Scottishness in Scotland. It is difficult to see what can be the sources of a new Scottishness. Celticism? One hears a good deal about the virtue that is in Celtic literature. But can Celtic literature, even assuming what exists of it has this virtue, ever mean much to a people who would first of all have to learn Gaelic in order to read it?

It is not simply that there is no modern Scottish culture ; it is that there is no culture of any kind in modern Scotland. In the fifteenth century—the century in which the universities of St. Andrew's, Glasgow and Aberdeen were founded by the Catholic Church—there was a culture in Scotland which was both Scottish and European. The evidence of it is the poetry of Dunbar and Henryson. It may or may not have had its centre in the Court—Henryson was no Court poet, and Dunbar, who was even more various than Henryson, was a Court poet and a poet of several

other kinds—but at any rate it was something that was definitely there. In the Edinburgh of the eighteenth century there was a Scottish culture and across the street eighteenth-century European culture as well. There was Robert Ferguson and there was David Hume, although no longer one and the same man. Even so late as the beginning of the nineteenth century there were the Edinburgh Reviews. But to-day? When Mr. Neill says that few Scotsmen to-day are able to distinguish between a Burns Song and a Song by Harry Lauder he says something which is unfortunately true. It is equally true that few Scotsmen to-day are able to distinguish between any two songs or poems of any sort. The answer to the question why modern Scotland is indifferent not only to Scottish literature but to literature would be very much the same as the answer to the question why the modern world is indifferent to literature. It would be shirking the main issues to fix the blame upon Calvinism or the Union.

It is not easy to see exactly how political economic action would cure the present state of affairs in Scotland or elsewhere. It is true that economically, on the evidence Mr. G. M. Thomson so well presents, Scotland seems to be in a worse condition than England, due largely to the sucking of its industry south. But even if economic prosperity were brought to Scotland what reason is there to suppose that culturally Scotland would come alive again? To put it crudely, there is no evidence that economic booms are followed by cultural booms and economic slumps by cultural slumps. If they were, the recent history of culture would be very exciting. This is not the same as saying that there is no relation between the economic and social structure of a country and the literature that may be produced in it. ' Progress ' has destroyed the older economic and social structure of Scotland, as of so many other countries, and destroyed it so suddenly as to destroy with it the tradition in which a distinctively Scottish literature had been produced.

It is true that attempts at ' cultural nationalism ' by political means and for political ends seem to be a symptom of the modern world. A number of European states have recently set their state broadcasters broadcasting with tireless frequency selections of their own national folk-songs. The result seems to be not general nausea but a sort of delirum which sets everyone singing the songs so

that one hears the songs everywhere one goes. But this activity cannot be genuine because no new folk-songs come into being as a result. It will be well therefore to be sceptical beforehand of any such attempt to impose 'Scottish culture' in Scotland. It seems unlikely that it really is culture and not something quite different which is imposed by such means.

The problem is how to recreate, or find some equivalent for, the tradition, or traditions, which have been destroyed. Something might surely have been hoped for from the schools and universities. Unfortunately they would have to be very different from what they now are before such hopes could be justified. The keystone of the modern Scottish State Education System is the Leaving Certificate Examination. The M.A. degree becomes more and more inevitably simply an advanced Leaving Certificate. Mr. Neill's attack on the Leaving Certificate and the M.A. degree examinations makes exhilarating reading and seems largely sensible. In some Scottish Education Department document there is a paragraph to the effect that the object of the Leaving Certificate Examination is simply to test the work done in the schools and not to determine it. It is common knowledge, though this does not seem to affect the Scottish Education Department, that the reverse is the case, and the fact has had to be fatalistically accepted even by the more intelligent members of the teaching profession. The nature of the work in the schools is almost entirely determined by the nature of the examination. An examination of the Leaving Certificate Examination in English shows how admirably designed it is to check any teaching that might conceivably help to develop discrimination—the power to distinguish between good prose or verse and bad—greater than that of the examiners themselves, which, on the evidence of these papers, is, to put it quite bluntly, non-existent. The literature papers in particular seem designed to blanket so much as actual contact with the actual work of any particular writer. It is not merely that these papers do nothing to encourage any Scottish literary teaching in the Scottish schools (regrettable though this is) as that they do nothing to encourage any literary teaching in the Scottish schools. Superficially there seems never to have been so much literary teaching in the schools ; actually, when now for the first time it is really needed, there has never been less. There can be no literature of any kind in Scotland

unless there is there not merely a reading-public, but a discriminating reading-public, a reading-public of taste, however small. Such a reading-public existed in Scotland in the fifteenth century, and again in the eighteenth. In the first half of the twentieth century it does not exist. The Scottish State Education System, a machine ultimately shaped by the supposed ' needs ' of the main commercial group, cannot be said, to put it as charitably as possible, to help to replace it. In the absence of tradition the schools do not do anything, perhaps cannot do anything, but at least do not attempt to do anything, to help to do what in the past was done by tradition. What is perhaps most frightening is that scarcely anyone seems aware of the problem, or even that there is such a problem.

As might have been expected of so sensitive a critic, Mr. Muir shows himself, in *Scottish Journey*, especially in his chapter on Edinburgh, one of the very few Scotsmen who are conscious of what is happening. It seems a pity that the recent opportunity of having Mr. Muir placed in such a central position as that of the Chair of English at Edinburgh has been missed. One of the things which seems to be most needed in Scotland at the moment is a school of criticism, provided it would be astringent enough ; there is now so much ground that would have to be cleared before the mind could be freed again for creation. In the circumstances the creative efforts of C. M. Grieve and of his friend, Francis George Scott, seem almost superhuman. Mr. Scott, as I understand it, is engaged in working out a modern musical idiom from Scottish folk music (particularly dance music) and his recent attempts to find musical settings for certain poems of Dunbar and Burns, working from the words outwards to the music, have obviously a close relation to the attempts of Grieve to recreate the literary tradition. *The Modern Scot*, which has recently died for lack of support, was justified if only for the place it found for the work of these two men. In the last few years, of course, several hundred writers have been mobilized as the Scottish National Literary Movement. It is impossible to treat them seriously. But it is necessary to treat Mr. Grieve's work seriously. Many names were associated, if not quite similarly, with the Irish Literary Movement. There remains from that the positive achievements of Synge and Yeats. The fully Irish achievement of Synge was evidently

still possible at that time in Ireland. Synge stylized Irish peasant speech that was still speech. But if a poetry anything like so magnificently vital as that of Yeats, even if it were not so Scottish as that of Yeats is Irish, were being written in Scotland, it would be more than justifiable to talk of literature, even if not in the fullest sense Scottish literature, in Scotland again. One finds oneself forced back upon the work of Mr. Grieve. The weakness of such of Mr. Grieve's work as is in his ' Synthetic Scots ' can at once be traced back to the fact that he himself does not speak ' Synthetic Scots,' nor does anyone else. His medium is not a spoken medium. It remains at least doubtful whether anyone, even with Mr. Grieve's gifts, is qualified to accomplish very much by starting so far back as first to create, or recreate, the language in which to create his poetry. It has to be remembered, however, that so great has been the rate of change that the childhood of such men as Grieve and F. G. Scott was probably much more Scottish than their adult life now is. Secondly it has to be remembered that Grieve is resurrecting words which are embedded in what might be called his own racial past, endeavouring to find new powers of life in them, and to enrich the present with them. But ' Another Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries,'[1] which is in English, is at least as good as anything Mr. Grieve has written in Scots. The equivalent could not be said of Burns.

There is a good deal that is Irish in Mr. Yeats's English. It may equally be that if a modern writer of Scottish antecedents wrote the English he spoke there would prove to be a good deal that is Scottish in that English. In so far as a writer is ' Scottish,' his ' Scottishness,' even if he is himself not conscious of it, will show itself in what he writes. This is certainly true of the writer

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[1] It is a God-damned lie to say that these
Saved, or knew anything worth any man's pride.
They were professional murderers and they took
Their blood money and impious risks and died.
In spite of all their kind some elements of worth
With difficulty persist here and there on earth.

' In the Children's Hospital,' ' In the Slaughterhouse,' are other poems in which he speaks the same bold language.

who possesses the honesty of genius, and since there can be no literature without this kind of honesty it is true of anything that may justifiably be called literature. There was no more distinctively ' Scottish ' writer than Dunbar. But there is reason to suppose it was not his primary and deliberate aim to be so. If the centre of interest, even in the case of a writer of Scottish antecedents, is in a literature that shall be ' Scottish,' then the interest is not purely in literature and is not purely literary. A difficult problem of sincerity arises. As soon as a writer attempts to be something other than himself in what he writes there is a dissociation which is bound to show itself in a certain falsity in the writing. This is true of a Scottish writer who attempts in his writing to be other than Scottish. But it is equally true of a writer of Scottish antecedents, whose ordinary conversation is in what is approximately English and whose share in discussions on politics and other abstract subjects is also and more necessarily ' English,' and who yet deliberately and self-consciously attempts to be ' Scottish ' in some of the things he writes as distinct from nearly everything he says. I try here to suggest some of the dangers. I would not be taken as saying that if one's antecedents are Scottish it should not be one's endeavour to be as conscious of those antecedents as possible. On the contrary it has been my ultimate contention that what has gone wrong is that most Scottish people have lost consciousness both of their Scottish antecedents and of their European antecedents, and of their Scottish antecedents and their European antecedents as having been once one. But to be deliberately and self-consciously ' Scottish ' in one's writing is not to have regained that lost consciousness.

JOHN SPEIRS.

AMERICAN MISCELLANY

THE ASSASSINS, by Frederic Prokosch (Chatto and Windus, 5/-).

PROLEGOMENA TO ANY FUTURE POETRY, by Howard Blake (Bruce Humphries, $2).

PITTSBURGH MEMORANDA, by Haniel Long (Writers' Editions, $2.50).

PANIC, by Archibald Macleish (Boriswood, 6/-).

We have here four fairly varied examples of contemporary poetic activity which might, with the exception of *Pittsburg*, have been written on either side of the Atlantic. Without implying any evaluating description, one can say that they are representative. Mr. Prokosch is a romantic ; he evokes the sensuous, the gorgeous, the exotic. There are strands of Baudelaire, Swinburne—the well-known rhythm, ' furies of my sleep,' ' fervour of thought or thighs,' Yeats—' stallions glittering with terror,'

> Remember Alexander,
> Alcibiades,
> Achilles: more slender
> Than the direst of these,
> Yet haughtier . . .

It is all done with great gusto and everything in ' a life too mad and miraculous to bear ' is on a vast scale both in the poems I have quoted from and in those with a more general theme, as here:

> Yes, but I dream, I dream ; from the deep orchestrations of war
> Still rises what innocent we adored. But then that noise like glass
> Of the falling towers, the great fashionable continental cities
> Along the doomed shore
> Falling like glass.

Mr. Prokosch has the strength of sincerity and his poetry is not merely sedative, but he lacks as yet that precision in the use of words which turns the first diffuse reaction to a poem into a tensely patterned response.

Mr. Blake, who also publishes for the first time, evokes very little reaction in me at all. His conceited preface, in which he practises a good deal his poetic doctrine of plagiarism, has as its main tenet a belief in the superiority of the concrete symbol over ' the multiplied abstractions found, unhappily, in a Wordsworth, a Shelley, a Swinburne.' Mr. Blake's work tends to be a string of hard separate ' symbols,' ' yoked by violence together,' without any but verbal relations—and not always even these. He has probably read Mr. Empson. Where a theme emerges it is the familiar modern sense of complexity or disillusion. Often the imagery seems to be merely unfelt decoration of something quite ordinary and pleasant, as in

> Yes, I could weep, but tears are not enough,
> Nor would a wind-blown, cool, redundant laugh
> Articulate the counterpoint I hear
> Cavorting through wan twilights, or . . .

which seems to me to be deliberately contorted, and where Mr. Blake's thoughts are far-fetched they are seldom worth the carriage.

Pittsburgh Memoranda is the work of many years, and is an undertaking which was clearly worth effort. Unfortunately the result does not impress one. We are given a series of cinematic sketches of people and events beginning in 1892. Most of it is in prose, and there is a mass of quotation from biographies, histories and handbooks (bibliography appended). The verse is of this quality:

> Our forefathers were pioneers.
> So are we.

with which the poem opens, and

> The paths of life are interwoven lives ;
> we have more references than we can imagine
> Now we are all explorers, and exploring
> for a new vision of our life, what is a city?
> Pittsburghers, what is Pittsburgh? It is the total
> of the relationships of us who live
> Pittsburgh is nothing else, now and forever.
>
> And it can be reciprocalness in growth

And it can be accordances of being
And it can be an unfolding altogether.

—with which it ends. All these are worthy sentiments but Mr. Long has failed to make them live as poetry. One is asked simply to admire, to pity, to be angry, but one responds, if at all, to what Mr. Long writes about rather than to what he writes.

Mr. Long writes contemporary poetic journalism ; Mr. Macleish has made another attempt at poetic drama. Again the influence of the cinema is obvious in the stage technique of alternate scenes. The author has also adopted a prosody designed to approximate to modern American speech, the main features of which are accentual metre and falling rhythms with weak endings. The whole business is purely mechanical in the execution and the verse usually reads like very late Jacobean, except where it is just stilted, as in the last words of his mistress to the great financier villain-hero:

O! what
Curse is on you!

The play is all too obviously managed by the dialectic process, the revolution is all too fatal:

Against fate
Even the strongest have not overcome
As water pursues on the grooved earth its channel
Choosing without choice so man his fortune—
Choosing without choice. Yours is disaster . . .

A little more spontaneous life enters the play when it is merely sentimental and when we ' run with the marching men.' One is tempted to unfair comparisons of political movements. I was also reminded in reading of the French film, *Ces Messieurs de la Santé*, which was made about the time of the Stavisky scandal. It is not an important film, but it is so obviously the work of a finer type of mind ; this comedy of a great financier's escape from gaol, his rehabilitation under a new name by way of a corset shop in the Palais Royal, and his second downfall, shows far more of human foolishness and stupidity and vulgarity than *Panic*, and the judgments are implicit. The bubble grows and breaks, and we do not see the pipe or feel the wind.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

OMNIBUS CRITICISM

THIS MODERN POETRY, by Babette Deutsch (Faber and Faber, 7/6).

This Modern Poetry is an excellent example of that kind of writing about literature which works by the process of sweeping into a large bag all the names of all the poets in any given period, with liberal quotations, adding a heterogeneous collection of ideas from all current schools of thought, literary, philosophical and psychological, shaking up the whole lot with large quantities of Style and a pinch of Marxism, and labelling the finished product ' criticism.' The one completely inadmissible thing is a simple judgment that one poet is important and another negligible. If the ' baffled old-timer ' really does follow the advice of the blurb, the last state of his mind cannot fail to be worse than the first.

The foreword makes it clear that evaluation is not contemplated (' we are too near them to do that with any assurance '). What is attempted is ' to trace the development of the verse of the past two decades, to take some account of the forces which have shaped it, and to suggest ways of understanding it.' In practice this means that the chapters are headed ' Backgrounds and Forerunners,' ' Bearers of Tradition,' ' Heirs of the Symbolists,' ' Filiations with the Metaphysicals,' ' The Burden of the Mystery,' and so on, and that often the same poets are found in more than one chapter. The effort to fit them into this scheme is incredibly strained and pedantic (Miss Sitwell and Mr. Eliot are both Heirs of the Symbolists) and Miss Deutsch's collocations are ludicrous. The account of the nineteenth century over-rates Poe, Whitman and Emily Dickinson ; then in ' Returning to Realism ' we come to a discussion of Masefield, Frost, Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg. In the chapter on Imagism, Pound, H. D. and William Carlos Williams are all discussed together (but *Mauberley*, we learn, ' though possibly better known than some of Pound's finer work, is so distinctly apart from it that it must be considered in another connection '). The Bearers of Tradition include the Georgians, De la Mare, Owen, Housman (praised for vowels and consonants and for helping us to bear the troubles of our proud and angry dust), Miss Millay, and Edwin Arlington Robinson: five pages on Hardy contain no mention of

the *Veteris Vestigia Flammæ* poems.

It would be pointless to go on copying out Miss Deutsch's lists. She writes like a Sunday reviewer summing up ' the year's poetry,' with the same nebulous critical vocabulary and the same tendency to go on making pseudo-critical pronouncements with no relation whatever to the work before her:

> ' Her poetry (Léonie Adams) has not the richness of T. S. Eliot's, the wit of John Crowe Ransom's, the variety of Elinor Wylie's . . . '
>
> ' His *Transitional Poem* (Day Lewis), which has for its theme the single mind, and utters not seldom with the voice of Emily Dickinson the thoughts of Spinoza, is metaphysical in intent rather than in method . . . '
>
> ' At its best Macleish's verse is as sharp as the New York skyline, crisp as the smell of new-cut shavings, troubling as the beat of a pulse . . . '

On Eliot she is indebted to *New Bearings in English Poetry*, and throughout there are evidences that she has read most of the relevant critical works, though usually contriving to misunderstand them or to misuse their analysis, like a dull pupil reproducing lecture notes. As one would expect, she takes Spender, Auden and Day Lewis together as the modern reaction to Eliot—' They are revolutionaries both technically and politically '—and the comparative criticism is on this level:

> ' If Spender's poetry expresses a less vivid personality it seems to tap deeper levels of feeling, so that where Auden is rousing and provocative, his friend stirs a stronger emotion . . . Lewis is more of a metaphysician than his friends . . . '

The conclusion, a prize piece of vague inclusiveness, contains a comparison of ' A slumber did my spirit seal ' with a number of modern poems on the same theme, but there is no comprehension whatever that the mere juxtaposition with Wordsworth is sufficient to show them all up as derivative and third-rate. Books of this kind only cumber the ground, and demanding no effort from the lazy-minded, they are loudly acclaimed, while it grows more and more difficult for serious criticism to find a hearing.

R. G. Cox.

LOGICAL NEGATIVISM

LANGUAGE, TRUTH AND LOGIC, by A. J. Ayer (Gollancz, 9/-).

One of the chief advantages of a quarterly periodical is that it is able to take account not only of the books that have been published during the preceding few months but also of the comments which these books have elicited. I do not suppose that I have seen all the available notices of Mr. A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*, but I am sure that I have read the most important of them ; and before turning to the main object of this review, which is to estimate the author's achievement, I intend—for reasons which I hope will become clear—to say something of the book's reception on the part of the philosophical and non-philosophical public.

That the reception has been a somewhat heated one, both when the book has been praised and when it has been condemned, should not be a matter for surprise ; Mr. Ayer obviously set out to create a *furore* one way or the other. What is surprising is the distribution, rather than the magnitude, of the disturbance. Those who condemned the book (and it is significant that the majority of the opposition consisted of general reviewers, rather than specialists in philosophy) condemned it because they found its conclusions distasteful ; and gave the impression of being *sure* that its arguments were vicious, because no respectable arguments could be conceived as leading to such vicious conclusions. Those who praised the book, on the other hand (and it is again significant that some of the most enthusiastic paeans have come from professional philosophers), praised it because they found its conclusions agreeable ; and gave the impression of being sure that its arguments were sound, because no arguments could be wholly false which led to such refreshing conclusions. The point I wish to make, then, is that, with one notable exception, a disproportionate attention has been paid to the conclusions of the book rather than to its arguments. The one exception is a review which appeared in the June number of *The Criterion* by the Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., about which I must now say a few words.

At the time of writing, the two main organs of othodox philosophy, *Mind* and *Philosophy*, have refrained from official comment upon Mr. Ayer's volume. One of them admittedly mentions that it has been ' received,' but we are left to wonder what form the reception took. It is not without significance, therefore, that Father D'Arcy's review should be the only thoroughgoing examination of the book that has so far appeared ; and such a forceful display of logic, delivered with masterly sureness by a Jesuit priest, will, I hope, be the means of providing Mr. Ayer, for whom the propositions of religion and morals are nonsensical, with food for thought. Meanwhile, it will be obvious to anyone who has read the article in question that to attempt to adopt a similar line of approach—there is bound to be occasional overlapping—will be to court disaster ; so that although the present review was conceived, and partly executed, before the June *Criterion* appeared, I have thought it best to eliminate a great deal that would otherwise have remained in it. This does not mean, and I hope that it will not be taken to mean, that the existence of Father D'Arcy's article imposes a ' restriction ' upon all subsequent reviewers ; for my own part, I regard it as a form of ' liberation,' a means whereby I am free to discuss the issues appropriate to this periodical.

I will now endeavour to state as clearly as I can the general substance of Mr. Ayer's argument. It is not a very long argument, and I have several times heard the author expound it in a few decisive sentences. It is as follows. Logical propositions may be divided, after the manner of Kant, into two kinds: synthetic propositions and analytic propositions. A synthetic proposition is one that can be verified in experience ; its meaning, in other words, is the method of its verification. An analytic proposition, on the other hand, is subject to no such empirical test, and for this reason all analytic propositions are tautologous. It follows, therefore, that a proposition which is neither empirically verifiable nor a tautology must be nonsensical; that is to say, its value, if it has any value, will be purely ' emotive.' By this apparently straightforward argument—expounded by Mr. Ayer with considerable gusto and relish—the propositions of metaphysics, religion and ethics—indeed, of any sphere which claims to assert knowledge ' transcending the world of science and

common sense '—are shown to be devoid of significance.

At first glance, no doubt, the argument may appear attractive ; but Mr. Ayer is wise enough to perceive that, before it can be said really to stand upon its own feet, considerable qualification is necessary. Unfortunately, he does not always realize that if you intend to qualify an argument, you must at the same time qualify your original estimate as to how much it proves. It is true that on occasion he does see the necessity for this added restriction—as when, for instance, he comforts the theist by saying that although God's existence cannot be proved, neither can it be disproved ; but I see no evidence that he realizes that, as a result of his initial modifications, *the whole book* proves very much less than either the dust-cover or his own first paragraph appear to assume. ' The traditional disputes of philosophers,' he begins in the manner of some Declaration of Rights, ' are, for the most part, as unwarranted as they are unfruitful. The surest way to end them is to establish *beyond question* what should be the purpose and method of a philosophical enquiry. And this is by no means so difficult a task as the history of philosophy would lead one to suppose. For if there are *any* questions which science leaves it to philosophy to answer, a straightforward process of elimination must lead to their discovery.' (My italics).

Comments upon Mr. Ayer's manner of composition must come later ; here it will be sufficient to indicate the confidence—quite unwarranted by the rest of the book—with which he sets out upon his self-imposed task, which is that of ' eliminating metaphysics.' We may note also the rather naïve way in which, having asserted that the ' traditional disputes ' of philosophers can be ' ended ' by an enquiry into philosophical method, he informs us that this is not such a difficult business as those of us who spend our time rummaging into the history of philosophy (an occupation in which we are sure Mr. Ayer has never indulged) might imagine. Now it would be possible to infer from these statements both that no one has undertaken an enquiry into philosophical method before (whereas in reality all the great philosophers have been preoccupied with problems of method) ; and that philosophy to-day can expect to do nothing except that which—by an oversight, apparently—has been left undone by science. The aim of philosophy, in other words, is not to construct grandiose systems about a subject-matter

called ' reality,' but to confine itself to the more menial task of clarifying the concepts employed by scientists.

We may now examine a little more closely Mr. Ayer's theory of verifiability. The process of ' verifying ' a proposition consists, according to Mr. Ayer, in knowing the kind of observations that would lead us to accept it as true or false. If, on the other hand, the assumption of the truth or falsity of a proposition is consistent with any observations whatever concerning the nature of future experience, then the proposition must be either a tautology or a pseudo-statement. In either case, it may be ' emotionally significant ' (whatever that may mean), but it can never be literally significant ; and the same method may be applied to statements of every kind, including questions. With regard to questions, we have merely to enquire ' what observations would lead us to answer the question, one way or the other ; and if none can be discovered, we must conclude that the sentence under consideration does not, so far as we are concerned, express a genuine question.'

This rule for determining the significance of propositions in general, and of questions in particular, is worth a moment's scrutiny. To discover whether a question is really significant—that is, really a question—we are advised to ask what observations would be necessary to enable us to answer it. Now I cannot see that there is an essential distinction between asking what observations would lead us to answer a question, and giving the answer itself. For to ask this particular question may be the means of giving the only answer that can be given ; and to reply that for this reason it is not an answer, is to make the curious assumption that a question that can only be answered in one way cannot be answered at all. To say of a question that it can only be answered if we possess the observations that will enable us to answer it, therefore, is nothing but a tautology ; but the matter does not end here. For it is obvious that if, in order to determine whether a question is really a question, we have to ask what observations would enable us to answer it, *this is to ask a further question*. And in order to determine whether this further question is significant or not, we have to repeat the same test, which consists in asking a still further question ; and so we go on in an infinite regress.[1]

[1]It is worth pointing out that whereas Mr. Ayer regards self-

It is necessary to point out that Mr. Ayer's distinction between ' practical verifiability ' and ' verifiability in principle ' does nothing to mend matters. There are many propositions, it is obvious, which we both understand and believe but which we cannot directly verify. We cannot directly verify them because we are incapable of placing ourselves in a situation where, to quote Mr. Ayer's own words, ' the relevant observations could be made.' (The example he gives is that there are mountains on the other side of the moon). We do know, however, what observations would lead us to believe such a proposition if, as is theoretically conceivable, we were once in a position to make them ; and this is what is meant by ' verifiability in principle.' But since he also maintains that ' a hypothesis cannot be exclusively refuted any more than it can be exclusively verified '—a good example, by the way, of his habit of qualification—he is compelled to fall back upon what he terms (significantly, it seems to me) ' weak verifiability.' In other words, the question we have to ask of a proposition is not: ' Would any observations make its truth or falsehood logically certain?' but simply: ' Would any observations be *relevant* to the determination of its truth or falsehood?' (My italics).

Let us concentrate for a moment upon the meaning of the term ' relevant.' The way to discover whether a proposition is true or false is to ask what observations would be *relevant* to its truth or falsity ; and this question is supposed to provide us with the sole criterion by which propositions can be conclusively verified. Now the point I wish to stress here is that such a question, whatever its value in other contexts, does not, and

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contradiction as an obvious sign of error, he does not adopt this attitude in the case of an infinite regress. These latter do not seem to disturb him in the least. On page 139, for instance, he admits that his theory of verification involves a continuous series of hypotheses which ' logically ' (and that is surely what matters) cannot be held to have an end ; yet this does not apparently invalidate it. Later, however, he is found to observe that ' in practice ' we follow not logical necessity but a ' purely pragmatic motive.' To have admitted this in the first paragraph would, I think, have saved both author and reader a great deal of trouble.

cannot by its very nature, provide us with a criterion at all. For to ask of a proposition what observations would be *relevant* to its truth or falsity is to ask something essentially tautologous. It is simply to ask what observations determining the truth or falsity of a proposition could be made in the kind of situation in which observations determining the truth or falsity of a proposition could be made. All that has been shown, in other words, is that the observations are ' relevant ' because they are the kind of observations that can be made in a ' relevant ' situation, and that the situation is ' relevant ' because it is the kind of situation in which ' relevant ' observations can be made ; but this does not tell us how ' relevance ' itself is determined. And what we need, I think, and what Mr. Ayer has signally failed to give us, is precisely *a criterion of relevance*. To say that we know *what* observations are ' relevant ' once we have found them, is not to say that we know how to find them in the first place ; and when towards the end of his book, Mr. Ayer outlines what he imagines to be a more ultimate criterion, I do not think (though we shall discuss the matter later) that any light is shed by it on the difficulties we have just discussed ; for the chief characteristic of this latter criterion is its ' irrelevance ' to the question at issue.[1]

On page 92 Mr. Ayer makes the extraordinary assertion that ' a sentence *says* nothing unless it is empirically verifiable ' (my italics) ;[2] and since the proposition of mathematics and logic

[1]For a theory of verifiability which avoids these defects, see an admirable article attacking the Logical Positivist position by W. T. Stace in *Mind* (October, 1935).

[2]There is a difficulty here which Mr. Ayer seems to have overlooked. In order to discover which category a particular sentence belongs to, presumably we have to put the sentence to test, *i.e.*, we have to verify it. But if it is the kind of sentence that conveys nothing to us, it is difficult to see how this could be done. As a matter of fact, his assertion on page 161 (which we shall have occasion to quote again) that ' if a sentence makes no statement at all, there is obviously no sense in asking whether what it says is true or false,' clears up the matter ; though we are left to wonder how a lecturer in philosophy at Oxford could overlook so blatant an inconsistency.

are clearly not verifiable in this sense, we are faced with the conclusion not merely that they are incapable of proof but that they are devoid of content. I say ' faced with the conclusion ' advisedly ; for directly he perceives the absurd consequences of his argument, Mr. Ayer hurriedly turns tail ; but in doing so, he plunges into such a morass of sophistry that I can only postulate an acute attack of intellectual giddiness. Having stated that it would be ' fatal to his thesis ' to admit that there are some facts which can be known independently of experience, he proceeds to adopt the following line of argument ; but as I am particularly anxious not to lay myself open to the charge of misinterpretation, I propose to begin my examination some way back.

The criterion of verifiability was intended to be a criterion of truth. We were originally given to suppose, in other words, that a proposition was true if it could be empirically verified. Later on, however, we are informed that an empirical proposition can never be more than probable. Consider what this means. It means, in the first place, that all empirical propositions are hypotheses ; and a hypothesis, as Mr. Ayer has reminded us, ' cannot be conclusively refuted any more than it can be conclusively verified.' What, then, has become of our criterion? A proposition is true, we had thought, because we can verify it in experience ; but we now know that nothing verifiable in experience can be more than probable ; and the reason why it cannot be more than probable is because it cannot be conclusively verified. If verification in experience, therefore, is our only test of truth, we must obviously be in a very sorry condition. The condition is as bad as it is, I believe, not so much because we have abandoned the criterion of truth as because we have abandoned truth itself. Now the characteristic sign for the abandonment of truth is the prompt emergence of a wholly new criterion—generally one connected with expediency ; and this is what in fact we find.

The difficulty is that, in Mr. Ayer's opinion, ' the philosopher must not attempt to formulate speculative truths, or to look for first principles or to make *a priori* judgments about the validity of our empirical beliefs ' (page 50). But if the philosopher is not entitled to make *a priori* judgments about the validity of our empirical beliefs, what right has Mr. Ayer to assert that no empirical proposition can be more than probable? Also, what

right has he to ' rule out *a priori*,' as he does on page 55, all casual and representative theories of perception which treat material things as if they were unobservable entities, seeing that this is a hypothesis which, since we cannot talk of degrees of probability (for this would introduce the ostracized notion of truth once more), has a right to be treated with as much respect as any other?[1] And in the second place, if the philosopher must not look for first principles, what can we say about the principles of Logical Positivism? If the principles of Logical Positivism are not *first* principles, then they must either be secondary principles or purely arbitrary principles; and I am sure that Mr. Ayer, with his claim to demonstrate ' beyond question ' the absurdity of metaphysics, would not tolerate the notion that metaphysics *might* be true after all. But let us examine his own account of the validity of these principles ; for it is here that we find the sophistries of which we have spoken.

We are expressly told on page 62 that the propositions of logic (of which philosophy is held to be a branch) are independent of empirical assumptions ; but further down the same page we discover that we are supposed to regard as ' even more obvious still ' the fact that they are independent of *metaphysical* assumptions. It is true that Mr. Ayer has told us that philosophical analysis is not an activity of ' dissection,' consisting of ' breaking up ' objects into their constituent parts ; and consequently that it is nonsensical to assert that his theory presupposes the metaphysical assumption that the universe is an aggregate of bare particulars. I am ready enough to agree that the example he has taken is silly ; but that is not because it is metaphysics, but because it is bad metaphysics. He had not yet proved that his theory is independent of *all* metaphysics, however, and I do not think this is possible for the following reasons.

To maintain that a common sense statement such as ' this is

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[1]According to the ' pragmatic criterion ' which Mr. Ayer expounds in desperation towards the end of the book, a hypothesis is to be valued according as it ministers to our instinct to survive. It is worth pointing out that by holding the above theory Bishop Berkeley lived to a much greater age than Mr. Ayer is likely to do with his naïve faith in the achievements of modern science.

a human hand ' is the equivalent of the proposition ' there is a thing, and only one thing, of which it is true both that it is a human hand and that this surface is part of its surface ' (to quote a typical example of philosophical ' analysis '), may or may not enable us to understand ' exactly what we mean ' by the original statement ; I do not ask at the moment whether it does or whether it does not ; all I would point out is that the process of definition or analysis (call it what you will) by which the original statement is ' translated ' into the proposition, implies the assumption, among others, that sense-data are parts of physical objects ; and this assumption is metaphysical. Secondly, Mr. Ayer confesses on page 61 that ' if we follow the Gestalt psychologists, who of all men talk most constantly about genuine wholes,' and who define such genuine wholes as ' ones in which the properties of every part depend to some extend upon their position in the whole,' then ' we may accept it as an empirical fact that there do exist genuine, or organic, wholes. And if the analytic method involved a denial of this fact it would indeed be faulty.' As this is one of the most startling assertions that the book contains, it is worth examining in some detail. In the first place, Mr. Ayer would appear to maintain that since the Gestalt psychologists most often talk about wholes in the right way, therefore we may accept it as an empirical fact that there *are* such wholes. But to know whether a fact is empirical or not we have to show not that it is believed to be such by Gestalt psychologists, but that it is verifiable in experience ; and this Mr. Ayer makes no attempt to demonstrate.[1] But bad as it looks, the argument is not even as good as this. For not only does Mr. Ayer start with the assumption both that the Gestalt psychologists have a certain view of wholes, and that this view is the right one—which is a purely arbitrary assertion on his part ; but also he maintains that since the existence of such wholes is an empirical fact, we may accept it as a basis of the analytic method. He forgets, however, that, according to his theory of verifiability, no empirical fact can be more than probable ; so that if the basis of the analytic method is itself only hypothetical, he cannot claim to deal in certainties at all ; and

[1] I cannot suppose him to think that he has demonstrated it merely by referring us to the experience of Gestalt psychologists.

this renders the whole thesis of the book inconclusive. But there is a further point. The assertion that an organic whole is one in which the properties of every part depend upon its position in the whole is not, of course, an empirical assertion at all, but a metaphysical one ; and if, as we have seen him to maintain, the method of analysis is unable to do without it, then it follows that the method of analysis is unable to do without metaphysics.

However much he may protest that philosophy has nothing to do with first principles, Mr. Ayer admits with Hume that although no one event intrinsically points to any other, we infer the existence of events which we are not actually observing with the help of ' general principles.' These principles, he further points out, can only be obtained inductively ; it is no good philosophy trying to look for them, because that is not its business. But the principles of Induction, we learn on page 48, are themselves not provable, their only justification being ' success in practice ' ; and here we have the new criterion of which we recently prophesied the emergence.

If the justification of Induction is ' success,' ' success ' itself is determined by ' experience ' ; but if success is determined by experience, what becomes of Mr. Ayer's proud declaration that the analytic method is ' independent of all experience ' ? The question is pertinent because it introduces us to the more ultimate problem as to the utility of philosophy in general. On page 45, for example, Mr. Ayer tells us that the duty of philosophy is not to test the validity of our everyday beliefs, since if a man chooses to doubt his beliefs, philosophy can do nothing to reassure him ; it is merely to ' show what are the criteria which are used to determine the truth or falsity of a proposition.' This does not mean, however, that philosophy can *justify* our beliefs ; philosophy merely shows that *experience* can justify them. ' We may look to philosophy to show us what we accept '—not, be it noted, what we *ought* to accept—' as constituting sufficient evidence for the truth of any given proposition. But whether the evidence is forthcoming or not is in every case a purely empirical question.'

The task of philosophy, we gather from these statements, has nothing to do with valuation. But if in telling us what we do all the time philosophy is performing a useful function (as Mr. Ayer believes that it is), then it follows, I think, that the activity

of telling us what we do all the time must be an activity of value ; that, in fact, we are ' better off ' for this information. Secondly, to say that philosophy tells us not what *ought* to be criteria of our beliefs but what *are* the criteria implies either that we have been employing the criteria *consciously*—in which case we do not need philosophy to tell us what we already know ; or that we have been employing them *unconsciously*—in which case the question as to whether we ought to be told them would never arise. Finally, to say that philosophy cannot tell us what we *ought* to accept as sufficient evidence for the truth of a proposition, but merely what we *do* accept, is to forget that what we *ought* to accept as sufficient evidence is simply ' sufficient evidence.' What is ' sufficient evidence,' indeed, is that which ought to be accepted ; but if it is the case that we already *do* accept sufficient evidence—in short, that we already do what we ought to do—then I cannot see that philosophy has any rôle to fulfil except one that is purely superfluous and redundant.

Philosophy, then, is valuable not so much because it tells us that something else does something as because it does something itself ; or more simply, that in telling us that experience justifies our beliefs, it is telling us something that we could not have learned from experience alone. Now Mr. Ayer has already told us both that propositions which are not verifiable are tautologies (when they are not emotive reverberations), and that a proposition which is not verifiable ' says nothing ' (' our fundamental contention '—page 92). Now I do not know whether he means that when we say ' this is water ' we are saying something, but that when we say ' water is water ' we are saying nothing ; I seem to detect a slight uncertainty on this point ; but if he means that the propositions of philosophical analysis, being independent of experience (for we must state his view as we find it), are not merely tautologous but devoid of content, then I am at a loss to see how the book came to be written. I can only ask the reader to compare the assertion on page 92 with that on page 62, and leave it at that.[1] The extraordinary thing is that Mr. Ayer seems

[1]How Mr. Ayer can conceivably reconcile his attitude to mathematics and logic with the already quoted remark on page 161 that ' if a sentence makes no statement at all, there is obviously no

perfectly conscious of what he has said and gives the impression of not minding in the least. In fact, what he does is to say that although the propositions of mathematics and logic are necessary tautologies (page 114), the admission that there *are* such things as ' necessary truths ' would knock the bottom out of his theory (page 92). I can only ask the reader once more to compare these two references and verify (empirically) the fact that I have not travestied the author.

But the worst is yet to be. Mr. Ayer states the facts of the case with alarming perspicuity. If empiricism is correct, he says, no propositions which have factual content can be either necessary or certain. In short, when faced with the ' truths of mathematics and logic,' the empiricist *must* show (the aim of empiricism being, apparently, not the maintenance of truth but the maintenance of empiricism) either that they are *not* necessary truths—that is, that the ' truths of mathematics and logic ' are not truths at all, but hypotheses ; or that they have no factual content—that is, that they ' say nothing.' Now before proceeding to examine the course which Mr. Ayer finally adopts, I must pause to discover whether he has not already overstepped himself. The task of showing that the truths of logic, for instance, are hypothetical can only be conducted by means of a logical argument ; and the fact that Mr. Ayer gives an *ill*ogical one makes no difference—he would have given a logical one if he could. But if this is so, the conclusion that the ' truths of mathematics and logic ' are hypothetical can never be more than hypothetical itself ; and if the validity of empiricism is intimately bound up with this conclusion, then it follows that Mr. Ayer's claim to have given an ' unquestionable ' refutation of metaphysics is not merely logically unjustified but a piece of intellectual impertinence.

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sense in asking whether what it says is true or false,' I do not know. I should have thought it obvious that if, as we learn on page 92, ' a sentence says nothing unless it is empirically verifiable,' it is absurd to describe the propositions of mathematics and logic—which. since they are not empirically verifiable, ' make no statements at all '—as ' necessary truths.' For to ask whether they are true or not, let alone *necessarily* true, must clearly be nonsensical.

It need hardly be observed that if all 'truths' are hypothetical—if, that is to say, the most that can be said of a proposition is that it is 'probably true'—truth itself disappears. But it is only fair to remark that Mr. Ayer has a theory of truth which enables him to do quite well without it. Anything standing between Language and Logic is bound, for the philosophical analyst, to be somehow 'in the way'; so that it is not surprising that Mr. Ayer should proceed to enunciate a theory whereby truth is completely 'absorbed' by its two senior partners. Briefly, the theory is that in order to say that a proposition is true we have merely to *assert* it, while in order to say that it is false we have merely to assert its contradictory; in other words, the so-called 'problem of truth' is a pseudo-problem. Now I cannot stop to pursue the implications of this theory, but it would be interesting to know what status Mr. Ayer would accord to his own assertion about 'assertion.' Is it true, we might ask, merely because it is asserted; or since the notion of truth is misleading—what is the difference between its assertion and the assertion of its contradictory? Or is there a still further criterion by which we are guided? We gain some light on this question—or at any rate some information—from later pages.

On page 134, for example, we read that 'so long as we take suitable steps to keep our system of hypotheses free from self-contradiction, we may adopt any explanation of our observations we choose.' Mr. Ayer is perfectly justified in making this statement, because it is simply the logical conclusion of his 'theory of truth.' But I do not see that he can possibly reconcile it with his statement a few pages back (page 125) that 'an empirical proposition or a system of empirical propositions may be free from contradictions and still be false.' For how are we to judge falsity when we have already agreed that to speak of anything as 'true' is misleading? By 'false,' however, Mr. Ayer does not mean the opposite of 'true,' for this would savour too much of metaphysics; he means rather that which fails to satisfy what he has already described as a 'material criterion.' The object of hypotheses, he tells us on page 139, is either to provide us with a means of 'anticipating future experience,' or, more simply, to minister to our 'simplest desires, including the desire to survive'; or both.

This, of course, is pragmatism, and of pragmatism we may

say that it is all very well so long as it is not really something else. The pragmatist, in other words, must see to it that he does not make too many unexamined assumptions—assumptions, for instance, such as that existence is a good and should be prolonged. But it is in telling us the kind of hypotheses of which his pragmatic criterion would naturally approve that Mr. Ayer seems to me to commit his crowning *bêtise*. 'We trust the methods of modern science,' he says, 'because they are so successful in practice.' Successful? In what way? In ministering to our simplest desires? In helping to prolong life? I cannot believe Mr. Ayer to be talking seriously.

Having given us clearly to understand, then, that the admission of necessary truths would be fatal to the maintenance of empiricism, Mr. Ayer, quite unperturbed, proceeds to argue as follows. We must reject out of hand,[1] he maintains, the view of Mill that the propositions of mathematics and logic 'have the same status' as empirical propositions—that is to say, that their validity is determined in the same way. And in order to understand what precisely their status is 'it is necessary to make a distinction which is perhaps already contained in Kant's famous dictum that, although there can be no doubt that our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience.' The propositions of mathematics and logic, he then asserts, are independent of experience in the sense that they do not owe their validity to empirical verification . . . I wish to arrest the argument here for a moment. In the first place, it is obvious that if the propositions of mathematics and logic do not possess the same status as empirical propositions because their validity is not determined in the same way, they cannot possess the status of empirical propositions at all, since the validity of empirical propositions is only determined in one way—namely, by verification in experience. And if, as he goes on to maintain, the propositions of mathematics and logic are independent of experience in the sense that they do not owe their validity to empirical verification, we must point out that there can be no

[1]Such 'out of hand' rejection on the part of one who believes that a hypothesis can be neither conclusively refuted nor conclusively verified is surely somewhat 'high handed.'

other sense in which they can be both independent of experience and not at the same time necessarily true in the sense that he wishes to avoid. Bearing in mind what we have just established, we can now observe the rest of the argument. The truths of mathematics and logic, he asserts, are discovered through an inductive process ; ' *but once we have apprehended them we see that they are necessarily true*, that they hold good for every conceivable instance.' Remembering that he started off with the assumption that if he once found the propositions of mathematics and logic to be necessarily true he would go out of business, we can only describe this argument as a most unfortunate lapse—and that, as I think the reader will agree, is to put it lightly. I will not labour the fallacy : suffice it to say that Mr. Ayer gives us no indication whatever as to how we can know that the propositions of mathematics and logic ' hold good for every conceivable instance, nor as to what he means by the word ' apprehension.' What I wish rather to do here is to guard against a possible line of counter-attack. Mr. Ayer may argue that he has not begged the question at all, but that what he has done is to show that the propositions of mathematics and logic have a different ' status ' from empirical propositions in the sense of a different ' origin.' In other words, since we come to know them through a process of induction, they inhabit a special category by themselves. But I do not think that such an argument has any force for three reasons. In the first place, that which owes its origin to an inductive process is, as Mr. Ayer has asserted time and again (see pages 48 and 58, for example), never more than probable ; and it is his primary assumption that the truth of mathematics and logic are necessary. And secondly, he has already asserted on page 95—the page immediately *before* that on which he expounds the argument we have just criticized—that in maintaining that the truths of mathematics and logic are known independently of experience, he does *not* refer to the ' historical question concerning the way these truths were originally discovered ' (what is the distinction, I wonder, between the way they were originally discovered and the way *we* originally discover them?); so that the argument from ' origins ' falls to the ground. And finally, since he has all along maintained that the truths of mathematics and logic *are* known independently of experience, I cannot see that there is any more

to be said—except, of course, that this assertion, coupled with the statement that the truth of this assertion is fatal to the main thesis of the book, is, if possible, even *more* fatal to the main thesis of the book.

And here I would leave this criticism. But I could not end without some reference to what is perhaps the most important, and certainly the most significant, chapter in the book, that entitled ' A Critique of Ethics and Theology.' It is here that Mr. Ayer reveals himself as most in his element and here, in our opinion, that he sinks to his lowest level ; but since it is also here that his methods are best observed ' at work,' to conclude our review at so critical a point would be unwise, if not unfair.

When I speak of a ' lowest level,' I refer primarily to Mr. Ayer's explanation of moral judgments in terms of emotive assertions of disapproval, whereby, for example, the moral judgment ' Stealing money is wrong ' is made the equivalent of the emotive utterance ' Stealing money ! !'—an explanation which, since it neglects to tell us not only *why* we disapprove of certain actions and not of certain others, but also what is meant by the word ' steal,' is surely the most puerile piece of casuistry that a philosopher has ever put forward in the name of reason. For we do not need much intelligence to perceive that the assertion ' Stealing money is wrong ' is redundant, since ' stealing ' means nothing less than ' wrongfully taking.' In other words, the problem of what we mean by ' wrong ' has not been solved at all, but merely removed a stage further back. The interesting thing is that Mr. Ayer comes near to admitting this ; for he correctly points out that if we add to the assertion ' You stole that money ' the statement that the action of stealing money is wrong, we are not in reality making any further statement. This is perfectly true ; but only because the notion of wrongness is already present within the first assertion. I wonder, too, what he would make of the statement ' Murder is wrong.' Here again, if this statement is reduced to the ejaculation ' You committed murder!' or, more simply, to a head-line such as ' Murder ! !' Mr. Ayer is perfectly entitled to point out as before that in adding that the action is wrong, nothing is said that is not already expressed in the original statement ; but this is only because the additional assertion is redundant, since by ' murder ' we imply ' wrongfully killing.' Of

Mr. Ayer's distinction between 'emotive' and 'scientific' terminology (derived ultimately from I. A. Richards) upon which the argument is based, I cannot say much here ; all I would point out is that to talk of Thought and Feeling as if they were separate compartments of mental life is to come dangerously near both to erecting a new brand of 'faculty' psychology, and to implying that all expressions of 'feeling' are nonsensical. For what is this Feeling which can be 'expressed' but cannot 'convey'—is not 'about'—anything? And what is this mysterious distinction, elaborated on page 162, between 'evinced' feelings and feelings that we 'have'? This latter point is worth examining.

It is one of Mr. Ayer's fundamental contentions that there can be no dispute about questions of Value. Suppose two persons to be arguing. One says 'Tolerance is a virtue,' to which the other replies 'You don't approve of it' (I take his example). On the subjectivist view, which Mr. Ayer condemns, the second would be *contradicting* the first ; on Mr. Ayer's own view, however, there would be no contradiction, because the first 'would not be making any statement about his own feelings or about anything else'—he would simply be 'evincing' his feelings, which is 'not at all the same thing' as saying that he 'has' them. To this we can only reply that, according to the Oxford Dictionary, the word 'evince' means precisely 'to show that one *has*' ; so that the distinction between 'evincing' a feeling and 'having' it is illegitimate. And secondly, if it is true that the second person's utterance is not a statement about *anything* (and a statement which is neither about one's own feelings nor about anything else cannot be a statement at all), then we should like to be told, first, how he ever got the impression that he was talking sense, and, secondly, if *all* our moral assertions are of this nature, how Mr. Ayer is able to distinguish them from the burblings, throat-clearings, laughter and other sorts of ejaculation that are the frequent accompaniment of rational speech ; for there is no evidence to suggest that a purely emotive utterance is different in kind from such as these. The problem which Mr. Ayer will have to tackle is not so much how it is that emotive utterances are different from scientific utterances as how it is that they appear to be similar. Secondly, if he regards moral judgments as the equivalent of such phrases as 'abracadabra,'

he has got to reckon with the fact that, in the majority of contexts, we do mean something by ' abracadabra '—it is not just a noise ; and I think that a psychology which finds this fact incredible may well be described as *below* ' the level of science and common sense '—that is to say, we may rightly regard it not (as Mr. Ayer regards the assertions of metaphysics) as pure nonsense, but as something altogether more vicious: a crude and primitive doctrine masquerading as the latest product of sophistication.

An exhaustive criticism of Mr. Ayer's book would, I fear, extend much further than the boundaries of a single article ; and it would no doubt become excessively fatiguing, if not irritating. At the same time, I could wish that the task were feasible ; for I do not remember having met with a book, written by one who claims to be a ' professional ' if not yet a professor, that revealed such a combination of immaturity, loose thinking and wholly unwarranted cocksureness. Had it been the first essay of a young undergraduate rather than the first book of a young don, we should have had no cause for alarm ; a young undergraduate has a certain right to his mental anarchy, which in any case will not usually survive beyond the first few tutorials. But this book has been put forward in all seriousness, and in many quarters it has been taken very seriously indeed. Whoever was ultimately responsible for the synopsis on the dust-cover, Mr. Ayer no doubt believes it to represent a faithful account of his intentions. But to claim that the author has ' settled ' the ' old controversy ' between Science and Religion is, as Father D'Arcy pointed out, going a little too far. He has done no such thing. What he has done is simply to demonstrate the inability of his theory to recognize that the problem is a problem. And if he imagines that the theist will derive what he calls ' comfort ' from the fact that a young Oxford don is unable to say whether the existence of God is probable or improbable (page 175), then he should define more exactly what he means by ' comfort.' There is a variety of comfort in knowing for certain that one is mistaken, and an obvious comfort in knowing for certain that one is not mistaken, but to know that one will never be certain whether one is mistaken or not is, I should have thought, of all mental states the most uncomfortable. There are parts of this book—notably the chapter

on ethics and theology—which contain observations of such patent absurdity that I am at a loss to wonder why some kind friend (perhaps one of those mentioned in the preface, 'who have discussed with me every argument of this treatise') did not take it upon himself seriously to persuade Mr. Ayer that, for his own good and future reputation, it were better to omit them. In saying this, I am again most anxious to avoid exaggeration. But I do not think that anyone reading this book, and comparing its first clarion sentence with the subsequent argument, could honestly regard it as the product of a disciplined mind. To describe its arrogance ('when we come to settle the problem of realism and idealism') as the arrogance of youth, or its impertinence as a charming impertinence, is I suppose the most charitable attitude to adopt; but I am not sure that it is not also the most sentimental attitude, and for this reason the most dangerous. And I do not find Mr. Ayer's scepticism, if it can be called such, so refreshing and stimulating as a mature scepticism—would there were more of it—should be; partly because he finds in it reason for gloating, which the mature sceptic never does, and partly because he occasionally refuses to take the full consequences of it—as in his final chapter entitled 'Solution of Outstanding Disputes,' where he seems wholly oblivious of the fact that such 'solutions' as he gives can, in the nature of his theory, be no more than probable. Finally, you cannot convince your audience that for twenty-five centuries philosophers have been talking nonsense—or, what comes to much the same thing, talking sense only when they did not know it—if you yourself give the impression of never having seriously studied the work of any philosopher who had the misfortune to be born before Hume. I know that for Mr. Ayer a pre-Humian philosopher must seem a prattling fool, but I doubt if it is in the spirit of Hume to raise this assumption to the level of a necessary truth. And if philosophy is criticism, as Mr. Ayer believes, then the critic's first duty is to discover how men have come to think what they do; and this entails a great deal more sympathy and understanding for the philosophers of the past than Mr. Ayer at the moment is evidently prepared to show.

E. W. F. Tomlin.

RURAL CIVILIZATION

THE OPEN AIR, AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE, by Adrian Bell (Faber and Faber, 7/6).

That anthologies are unsatisfactory is a platitude very useful for reviewers who, having uttered it, can go on to wonder why Mr. So-and-so has included this, and how on earth he has managed to exclude that, and end up by saying that, nevertheless, he has made a good job of it. Mr. Bell has spoilt this approach: he has made an anthology into a book, a claim that he makes in his introduction, and which is fully justified. The book can be read straight through, with no feeling of scrappiness, for the extracts are placed skilfully and subtly to give a coherent account of the rich tradition of English village and farm life which is now so rapidly dying away. Much of the material will already be familiar to readers of *Scrutiny*, for *The Wheelwright's Shop* and other works of George Sturt are drawn on extensively. Yet there are many who will be led to these books by Mr. Bell, and so to a criticism of modern society with a sounder backing than mere disgust or intolerance. We can see from this book what we have lost and having put this at its proper value we may be more sure of what we wish to replace it by, or in what way we wish to see the social framework altered. For it must be admitted that, without this serious consideration, many who agree with the implications of this book may well fall into a nostalgia, and do nothing else about it. Mr. Bell is aware that this will, at any rate, be the most likely accusation of critics. But any reader of average intelligence must realize that there is no question of an archaistic revival of Merrie Englande—we all know how depressing the usual folk-dance circle it. To sentimentalize about the past is a very different thing from realizing the strength and virtue of the old tradition and endeavouring to incorporate them into a state of society which must, whatever the outcome, be vastly different from that in which the tradition was formed.

Mr. Bell does not weight his dice either: he chooses extracts which show us the incredible hardship and poverty of the rural labourer, which lasted well into the latter half of the nineteenth

century, and is by no means extinct ; the misery and physical discomfort of much of the work, scarcely surpassed in the most mechanical processes of mass-production. We are reminded that the agricultural labourer has been, and still is, the most neglected member of the community, and so we can neither hope nor desire a complete reversion to former conditions. Whether he was, or was not, happier than the factory worker to-day is not the question : he existed frequently in conditions that we have no right to think complacently of any human being's living in, and which dispel, effectively, any idea of a Golden Age. Yet, allowing for all this, the impression remains that we have lost far more than we have gained : how to replace this loss satisfactorily is a problem far more difficult of solution than any present political party cares to realize. If this book ever appears in a cheap edition, it might be of great use with Sixth-forms, to put their ideas of progress and civilization in order, and dispel the smug optimism which they imbibe, all too frequently, from their environment and daily newspaper.

The standard of extracts is surprisingly high, although ' literary ' examples from Ruskin and less reputable authors seem a little incongruous. The English scene is not neglected though here again the approach is original and intelligent and not *via* the purple patch. The wide welcome the book has received shows how useful it could be ; even *Punch* called it ' a book in a thousand.'

FRANK CHAPMAN.

MISSIONARY SURVEY

THE NEW SURVEY OF LONDON LIFE AND LABOUR, Volume IX, Life and Leisure (P. S. King, 17/6 net).

This inspection of the poor of London was carried out by a team of workers from the point of view of the enlightened respectable, and with the exception of one section it is sufficiently described as a representative class product. You know beforehand the kind of thing you'll find: complacency (disarmingly qualified but never relinquished) about the state of things now compared with forty years ago ; English like that of the better Sunday newspapers ; ethical and cultural assumptions quite unthought-out but reflecting those of our more serious dramatists ; and, on the other hand, thorough and precise information on matters you've only had a vague idea about before ; accurate statistics, well set out and carefully interpreted ; and a very clear lay-out of the material with good contents summary and index. In short, something rather better than an immensely long column in one of those Sunday papers.

The general line of approach may be seen in the classification of the material into ' healthy enjoyment and recreation ' (cinemas, sport, dancing, music, walking, etc.), self-improvement (educational classes, public libraries), and vicious indulgence (sex ' delinquency,' gambling, drink and crime). The allocation of space to the various topics seems to reflect the amount of material that awaited writing up rather than the prominence of the pursuits in social life ; the accounts of cinemas and twopenny libraries, for instance, are rather meagre compared to the long descriptions of the organization of workmen's clubs or adult educational classes or Boy Scouts. The absence of any imagination or individuality of approach, and also, of course, the wide range of the inquiry, tend to limit the work to collecting and sorting out fairly easily accessible statistical information (and occasionally, as in the very thorough chapter on crime, extending the scope of the ordinarily available figures). Needless to say, it may serve many useful purposes to have accurate figures conscientiously brought together like this.

The tolerant missionary tone prevails: for instance, ' . . . the registered club is on the whole a preferable, if not an actively

beneficent, alternative to the public house as a place for workmen to spend their evenings.' And the ethical assumptions of the missionaries merely reflect the habits of thought of their class. Generalizing on the partial ousting of prostitution by more general promiscuity they say: ' In any case extra-marital relations which have in them some emotional element are less grossly debasing than the commercial prostitution which they have supplanted.' It seems to me very doubtful whether these emotionally incoherent and muddled little adventurings (' He, the young man carbuncular, arrives ') are necessarily preferable to the simple sale of a simple service, although one may readily agree in deploring prostitution as we know it. But in the conventionally enlightened ethics of to-day the truth of the generalization is never questioned.

A further defect of the implicitly missionary attitude is that it prevents the writers from ever meeting their subject matter vividly and without unconscious interpretation. The chapter on gambling, notably, leaves us with a much better idea of what the reformers regard as their problems in eradicating gambling than of what gambling really means to Londoners who engage in it. But in this and other respects an exception must be made of the chapter ' Drink ' (in Part III—' Indulgence and Delinquency ' !) by B. D. Nicholson, in which individual interest and directness have broken through institutional routine. Instead of giving an impeccably balanced review of the opinions and rival statistics offered by brewers and temperance reformers Mr. Nicholson went round the pubs and watched people drinking. As a result his chapter gives you a clear impression of what London drinking is like and what desires it satisfies—and of course a much more complete and better organized impression than casual experience could give, for the chapter is none the less thorough for having life in it. This part of the book is worth reading ; the rest is worth knowing the whereabouts of in case you should ever need its figures.

D.W.H.

FARMING NEAR SKYE

HIGHLAND HOMESPUN, by Margaret Mary Leigh.

The chief value of Miss Leigh's book is in what it tells us of the life of the Highland crofters, such as yet remain. She farmed in the Western Highlands: her holding had originally been enclosed from the wild by a local laird to be a home farm. That was seventy years ago. No machinery had been used and large numbers of people employed on the farm had kept it drained and clean and highly productive. With a change of fortune the farm was unable to support so many workers, and gradually the wild encroached again and the land became waterlogged and derelict.

When Miss Leigh took Achnabo there remained only a comparatively few acres of good pasture and tillage: the rest was rough grazing. With the help of a boy and casual labour she kept a few cows, store cattle and poultry, grew some oats and potatoes and made hay enough for winter feed, living the kind of life imposed by local conditions.

The story, even more than a story of English farming would be, is one of struggle with the weather.

> ' However particular, punctual and systematic you may be in England or in the Lowlands, abandon it here . . . If man is unreliable it is perhaps because he has to adapt himself to the weather that rules his life.'

To the ' foreigner ' itching to get things done, the natives were procrastinating and indolent. Miss Leigh has the virtue of being able to see them also in relation to their surroundings.

Litter of things left lying about to rust, putting off and patching up with string ; yet in spite of all the crofter managing to live an independent life on a few acres of stony ground (a thing that would defeat the business mind), and an inheritance of skill in work still almost intact.

The hilly nature of the ground and the climate made it a place where machinery was unworkable. Even on her own holding no mower was used but the scythe.

> ' The only correct method is to cut just so much as your haymaking staff can handle at a time. One good scytheman can keep two or three or even four haymakers busy, and can be

made to drop his scythe and do something else at a moment's notice.'

Labour was not only paid with money: there was a residue of life organized on a co-operative basis.

'We say to Angus, "What about coming up the next good day and cuting some grass?" He comes, and we saw some planks for his new cart. There is something pleasant about this neighbourly co-operation . . . Of course the system has its annoying side. Your neighbour is as free as air.'

He may not come. Here one world is up against another. It was the complaint of the earliest business farmers: the peasant is too independent ; he will stand talking on the common instead of working on the capitalist farm. Therefore enclose the common.

What industrial farming has in fact come to may be summarized by the remark of a farmer on a neighbour who had just bought a new tractor binder, price £80, that he would need to keep it working from first thing in the morning to last thing at night all through the season to make it pay—cutting his neighbour's corn by contract as well as his own. In New Zealand, according to a recent article in the *Times*, modern farming is degenerating into a sheer gamble—men taking land and ordering expensive power machinery on the chance of a good season making them able to pay for it and clear a profit. If lucky they retire with their gains to the town.

Where in the past there has been profit in driving out the crofter (and his English counterpart) it has been done: but there remain, as in the Western Highlands, a few places where he retains his independence by virtue of soil or climate, living on the necessity line and spending long hours in talk and interchange ; hospitable, honest, without that mass-dependence—in work and holiday—that is the mark of the industrialized man.

And he has become a something wistful to everybody. Miss Leigh, who preaches too much but is saved by a sense of reality, notes the crofter's wish-fulfilment value for the 'wage-slave.' But bound to a high 'standard of living,' with the whole life emphasis displaced, subsistence-power lost, what hope is there for him? What is the good of talking about the crofter's life on a few stony acres, his non-adherence to the standards of respectable

industry, of tidiness, of forethought? How, in the face of ' material benefits,' could the emphasis be readjusted? The best of us must be content with scenery. ' Apart from the question of profit and loss Achnabo must be one of the most beautiful places in Scotland.'

There is no individual outcome, as Miss Leigh implies in her giving up of Achnabo. ' I suppose our next farm will be in the South. We are both English, and . . . shall in due course return to our native land.'

ADRIAN BELL.

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIMENT

SANE SCHOOLING, by J. H. Simpson (Faber and Faber, 7/6).

Educational reform is much in the air these days—in the secondary schools at least. The original public schools go on in the same groove, son follows father to Eton and so on, but less stable institutions must compete for business, and it is the boarding school with something different in the shop-window that keeps its numbers up in the lean years. The day secondary school also competes with the boarding school: many of them have enlightened headmasters and offer at least as good an education as the public school.

So there is a place for books recording experiments in education. This particular book (in spite of its rather priggish title and extravagant blurb) should be useful: to people with a free hand in school, who would profit from the experiences described ; to open-minded parents especially, because Mr. Simpson is a left-wing propagandist without being frightening ; and even to those in the usual scholastic tramlines, for many of the suggestions may be carried out in the framework of existing schools.

The author had enviable good fortune and opportunities in being entrusted, as first headmaster, with the development of an entirely new boarding school. The boys of Churnside, as the school is called in the book, were of secondary school age and drawn (at first exclusively and later partly) from surrounding elementary schools. Thus the school, drawing its pupils from sources not usually open to endowed schools, and including an unusually wide social range, was unlike any of the recognized types of school, and Mr. Simpson did not make the mistake of

emulating those types when developing his school organization and tradition. Certain differences of outlook between boys from richer and from poorer homes when they first entered the school are described in an interesting section of the book (pp. 39-55). In particular Mr. Simpson found that the working-class children tended to resent and fear authority as something externally imposed. He accordingly handed over most of the out-of-class authority to the children themselves, by means of a scheme of government based on ' nineteenth century democracy in England and America.' There was a legislative General Meeting ; an elected Council with judicial powers ; and elected executive committees and officers, including a committee to take entire charge of games. It may be doubted whether such a complete abdication of authority would usually be wise: whether, for example, the children in a school are the people best fitted to make decisions requiring experience and knowledge, or to impose punishments (Mr. Simpson makes the surprising admission that at one period he permitted corporal punishment) ; but the author's account of the advantages which on balance followed in this case is convincing. (Moreover, if schoolmasters must have a bias, it is better to entrust too much to children rather than too little).

' I thought of education increasingly as providing the right conditions for growth, and decreasingly as bringing up, or moulding character, or training the mind. I believed, too, that it must be growth of the individual and of individuality.' Any such aim demands on the part of the teacher a subtle discipline: self-effacement, genuine disinterestedness, freedom from prejudice, sentimentality or irrelevant emotion. On the level of opinions the implications are straightforward enough. There is no place in schools for deliberate propaganda. The business of schools is not to instil political or other prejudices, even the ' right ' ones, but to minimize prejudice of every kind. An anti-Fascist crusade was proposed recently at a meeting of an association of progressive schools. This, if carried out, would have been a serious mistake in policy, since open-mindedness is a greater asset than the right opinion for anyone *except* a Fascist. At the level of emotional relationships, however, disinterestedness is by no means so simple. A teacher free from any suspicion of cruelty or of wishing to dominate children personally, may still, as Mr. Simpson suggests

(p. 25), be seeking to turn them into vicarious rebels, or to impose on them values determined by his private and unsuspected fears. There is no essential difference between bullying them and tricking them into a premature regard for the Good, the True and the Beautiful. One of the most interesting questions provoked by the book turns on this: how nearly was Churnside able to maintain disinterestedness in this wider sense?

It must be admitted that there are disturbing passages scattered through the book. Page 236 has a breathless hush in the close, and the school tie, freed from compulsion, appears elsewhere. Public ignominy is used as a deterrent to the unpunctual and untidy. There is a very odd passage (p. 164) on ' the pain—and the relief—of confession . . . The disappointment of the master will be part of the punishment of the boy.' And one is hardly reassured by the description of a scheme of group marking (p. 147) which might have been designed expressly to ' get ' just those more intelligent and generous boys who are immune from individual mark-grabbing.

Fortunately these passages are not representative, as on most matters the attitude expressed is refreshingly sane. The author avoids the excesses of the doctrinaire revolutionary. ' I did not regard [the boys] as having any " right " to know why the rules were made, but it seemed to me to be common sense and educationally sound to assume that they would be interested in my reasons, and sufficiently intelligent to understand them. There is no doubt that by explaining your rules you avoid a great deal of contra-suggestion which makes for law-breaking.' He saw the government of his school as a frank dyarchy. He maintains that complete non-interference means merely the progressively tyrannical rule of the strong over the weak. He is critical of that imposing but misleading kind of school joinery in which the children merely assemble ready-made parts. Conventional as well as ' progressive ' pretensions come in for some needed debunking. He is tellingly, because calmly, critical of the public schools ; of their in-breeding and their tendency to render adolescence permanent ; of their defence of fagging as teaching service and of punishment as teaching endurance ; and especially of the wastage of undistinguished boys. ' The life and teaching of these schools were clogged with a self-conscious and complicated

formalism. The emotional side of education, at least as important as the intellectual or physical, was not so much ill directed as almost entirely ignored.' The book as a whole leaves no room for doubt that Churnside gave much greater encouragement to individual growth and group responsibility. Mr. Simpson claims that it was one of the advantages of his system of government by General Meeting that the debating-society mentality came to be valued at its true worth. It is of the essence of his method in relinquishing authority that he should leave the children to make mistakes (preferably with tangible results) and to learn from them ; though it must often have required great patience and courage not to intervene. A particularly interesting incident is described on pp. 119-120. It concerns an occasion when Mr. Simpson did intervene at a Council Session, to point out that those who had profited by the results of a certain offence, had in effect condoned the offence, and should therefore share in any penalty imposed. Mr. Simpson handled the situation perfectly. Exhortation and precept are always open to the suspicion of cant or vagueness, whereas a school morality developed out of such incidents may be not over-simple, yet perfectly understood and accepted by all the children concerned.

Whatever its disadvantages, the system seems incomparably better than the normal apparatus of rules and prefects, maintaining a discipline which has nothing to do with learning. It offers a form of organization outside school hours which can be positively educational. It meant that for a good deal of their time members of the school were not tied down to engagements or restricted by prohibitions. This is a great advantage. The compulsions found in most schools are irksome, and may induce an attitude which will prevent a member from getting the best out of either his work or non-work hours. In most schools there is in the minds of boys a sharp distinction between work and play ; this has undesirable results, such as a waste of energy. The school which can remove this dichotomy may be called a success. It requires a staff which is not interested in ' results,' so that what is nominally a French period may be spent in discussing politics—' The conversation of boys is seldom more lively and interesting than when they should be doing something else, and they seldom listen with more attention.' Even people pre-occupied with examinations may be

assured that high-pressure cramming to secure results is not the best method: a candidate who takes up Latin a year or two before his examination is likely to do better than a boy who has been drilled for years against his will. What is more important is that in a school with a minimum of compulsion the individual develops more quickly and more fully. This is the experience of Mr. Simpson; and anyone who has had the opportunity of comparing disparate schools will concur. He noted 'what appeared to my, no doubt prejudiced, eyes, to be a very remarkable development in sensitiveness, and a certain poise of character, which marked many boys after they had been for a few years in the school.' (And *cf.* pp. 152, 202).

The book so far convinces that the school turns out 'decent fellows' and one looks to the curriculum chapter for evidence that it does something more. But this part of the book is more interesting for the issues it raises than for its positive recommendations. Mr. Simpson records 'a dimly conceived idea of the possibility of a national—but not in the least nationalist—culture, which might have been, and may yet be, based on a quite different conception of popular secondary education, a culture to which I have to confess that the kind of teaching in which I have been engaged for a good many years seems to me to contribute very little. I mean a culture rooted in the literature, and craftsmanship, and industry, and countryside of England, together with hardness and poise of body, and the sense of spiritual reality. I am very sceptical of the possibility of any deep and enduring popular culture which is not close to the daily work of the people.' The daily work of most people is minding a cardboard box maker, adding up other people's money or something equally inspiriting. Not one in a thousand of 'the people' is engaged in work in which you can root a culture worth a moment's consideration. We are already over-supplied with the only kind of 'culture' that can be close to the work of the people as it is at present, and needless to say Mr. Simpson doesn't approve of that. (But perhaps it's unfair to lay too much stress on this part of the book. The author admits that he approaches the subject of the curriculum with some uneasiness). If Mr. Simpson will consider the relation in the past between the 'culture' of this country and its economic organization, he will see that the one grew out of, was integral

with, the other. Folk songs were part of a strenuous agricultural round. But the point has been laboured enough in these pages.

Industry being what it is, and craftsmanship diminished to insignificance, we are left with the ' literature ' and ' countryside ' from Mr. Simpson's sentence. Literature is the means of keeping alive an uprooted culture, the means by which ' the vitality of the past enriches the life of the present,' and it must be a large part of any serious education. The countryside also can assist in education: it aids the growth of sensitiveness, provides a standard whereby megalopolitan civilization can be seen in perspective. Even in its decadence agriculture exemplifies a more normal and satisfactory way of life. Here the boarding school has an advantage over the day school ; the influence of the commercial environment (films, advertising and so on) is minimized—at a day school it tends to undo the effect of what went on during school hours. Mr. Simpson has an interesting page (257-8) on this advantage. ' In a society which really took seriously the education of all its children to the age of sixteen, and thought of that education less in terms of information, and more in terms of feeling and taste, the secondary schoolmaster would be given a chance. Whatever might be the means of testing the general work of the schools—examination, or inspection, or both—it would be ensured that in the secondary schools there would be some time not spent on prescribed " subjects." The headmaster would be able to count upon a certain number of hours when he could give a boy what he thought he needed most at the moment, without any thought of a future test or further objective. Very often he would find that what the boy needed most was simply a little intelligent and sympathetic conversation with an older person.'

But what goes on in school is not likely to be educational so long as we have an unsystematic collection of incoherent ' subjects,' a state of affairs which Mr. Simpson neatly exposes (pp. 260-2). ' The principal weakness of the secondary curiculum . . . is that too often it is not centred round any core, or related to any one main stem of learning or way of looking at life.' These conditions are perpetuated by the examination system, to which Mr. Simpson seems opposed, though rather half-heartedly, being inclined to make the best of a bad job. A pity, because he might

have added considerable weight to the opposition. The position isn't so hopeless as Mr. Simpson thinks, when even the President of the Board of Education points out to business men that matriculation is useless for business. Mr. Simpson puts his faith in reform—a blind alley. He forgets that the School Certificate was started with the best of intentions—'to test the ordinary work of the school'—and that it has ended by determining the curriculum for several years of a school career. However well-meaning reformers may be, there will always be plenty of headmasters and assistant masters in the treadmill who will twist and turn what looks well upon paper into the usual cramming drive. The system is inherently vicious. And it is compromise by people like Mr. Simpson that leaves us where we are.

There are other debatable and interesting views and suggestions—Greek should be learnt before Latin (an excellent page), marks should be abolished, domestic economy should be taught—but perhaps enough has been quoted to show that the book is worth attention.

R. O'MALLEY.
D. THOMPSON.

BACK-NUMBERS OF *SCRUTINY*

There is a constant demand for the back-numbers of *Scrutiny*, and all except No. 1 are still in print (obtainable of Messrs. Deighton, Bell & Co., Trinity Street, Cambridge), though the earlier numbers are running out. Among the articles and reviews that have not been reprinted in book-form are the following:

SURREALISME	Henri Fluchère	Dec., 1932
WILL TRAINING COLLEGES BEAR SCRUTINY?	L. C. Knights	,,
HISTORY AND THE MARXIAN METHOD	H. C. Butterfield	March, 1933
CROCE	James Smith	June, 1933
THE FRENCH NOVEL OF TO-DAY	Henri Fluchère	,,
'HERO AND LEANDER'	M. C. Bradbrook	,,
SCRUTINY OF EXAMINATIONS	L. C. Knights	Sept., 1933
FRENCH LITERARY PERIODICALS	Henri Fluchère	Dec., 1933

Art for the Common Reader	J. M. & D. W. Harding	March, 1934
Elizabethan Prose	L. C. Knights	,,
Alfred North Whitehead	James Smith	June, 1934
The Work of L. H. Myers	D. W. Harding	,,
Auden, Bottrall and Others	F. R. Leavis	,,
Ideals and Facts in Adult Education	W. A. Edwards	,,
Oxford Letter	H. A. Mason	Sept., 1934
Shakespeare's Sonnets	L. C. Knights	,,
The Novels of Jean Giono	Henri Fluchère	Dec., 1934
The Religion of Progress	J. L. Russell	,,
George Chapman (I)	James Smith	March, 1935
George Chapman (II)	James Smith	June, 1935
The Poetry of Isaac Rosenberg	D. W. Harding	March, 1935
Musical History	Bruce Pattison	,,
Dr. Richards, Bentham and Coleridge	F. R. Leavis	,,
Propaganda and Rationalization in War	D. W. Harding	June, 1935
Approach to Ariosto	J. H. Whitfield	,,
A Hundred Years of the Higher Journalism	Denys Thompson	,,
The Scottish Ballads	John Speirs	,,
Lady Novelists and the Lower Orders	Q. D. Leavis	Sept., 1935
Tradition and Ben Jonson	L. C. Knights	,,
The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins	F. R. Leavis	,,
The Maddermarket Theatre	T. R. Barnes	Dec., 1935
Thomas Hobbes	Michael Oakeshott	,,
The Critical Writings of George Santayana	Q. D. Leavis	,,
Scrutiny of Modern Greats	E. W. F. Tomlin	March, 1936
Tragic Philosophy	George Santayana	,,
Regional Novels	Q. D. Leavis	,,
The Robber Barons	Denys Thompson	June, 1936
Psychology and Criticism	Richard March and D. W. Harding	,,
A Note on Hopkins and Duns Scotus	W. H. Gardner	,,
The Revolutionary Simpleton	E. W. F. Tomlin	,,

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